NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

HISTORY

ROUGH PASSAGE

MAGELLAN'S FATAL VOYAGE

FANTASTIC BEASTS

ANIMAL GODS OF EGYPT

THE CELTS

ANCIENT PEOPLE OF SALT AND STONE

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Fate of the French Blue

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27 JEWELS
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"I've gotten many compliments o
this watch. The craftsmanship
phenomenal and the watch
simply pleasing to the eye.
—M., Irvine, C

"GET THIS WATCH.
—M., Wheeling, I

Back in Black: The New Face of Luxury Watches
"...go black. Dark and handsome remains a classic for a reason"
— Men's Journal

I'LL TAKE MINE BLACK...NO SUGAR

In the early 1930s watch manufacturers took a clue from Henry Ford's favorite quote concerning his automobiles, "You can have any color as long as it is black." Black dialed watches became the rage especially with pilots and race drivers. Of course, since the black dial went well with a black tuxedo, the adventurer's black dial watch easily moved from the airplane hangar to dancing at the nightclub. Now, Stauer brings back the "Noire", a design based on an elegant timepiece built in 1936. Black dialed, complex automatics from the 1930s have recently hit new heights at auction. One was sold for in excess of $600,000. We thought that you might like to have an affordable version that will be much more accurate than the original.

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Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.®*

Who was the first person to circumnavigate the globe? If it were trivia night, someone would probably blurt out "Ferdinand Magellan" because that's a simple answer.

The standard version (or what was probably taught in history classes covering European exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries) usually goes something like this: Magellan sets out from Spain in 1519, sails around South America's southern tip and through the Pacific, and returns in 1522 to become the first to sail around the world.

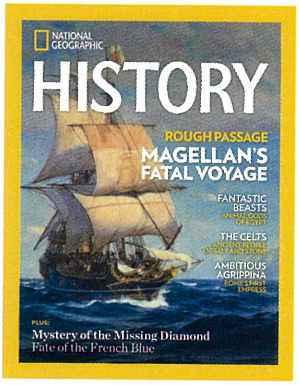
Only that's not true. The real answer is more complicated than that.

Magellan may have led the expedition that was first to sail around the world, but he himself did not complete the voyage—nor did most of his crew. Along the way, their numbers were decimated by illness, desertion, mutinies, and violence. Of the more than 200 men who started the voyage, only 18 finished it, and Magellan was not among them. In April 1521 on a beach in the Philippines, Magellan was killed by local leaders who refused to submit to the Spanish. The mission had to go on without him.

Trivia night doesn't lend itself to complicated answers, but questions of history often require them.

Amy Briggs

Amy Briggs, Executive Editor



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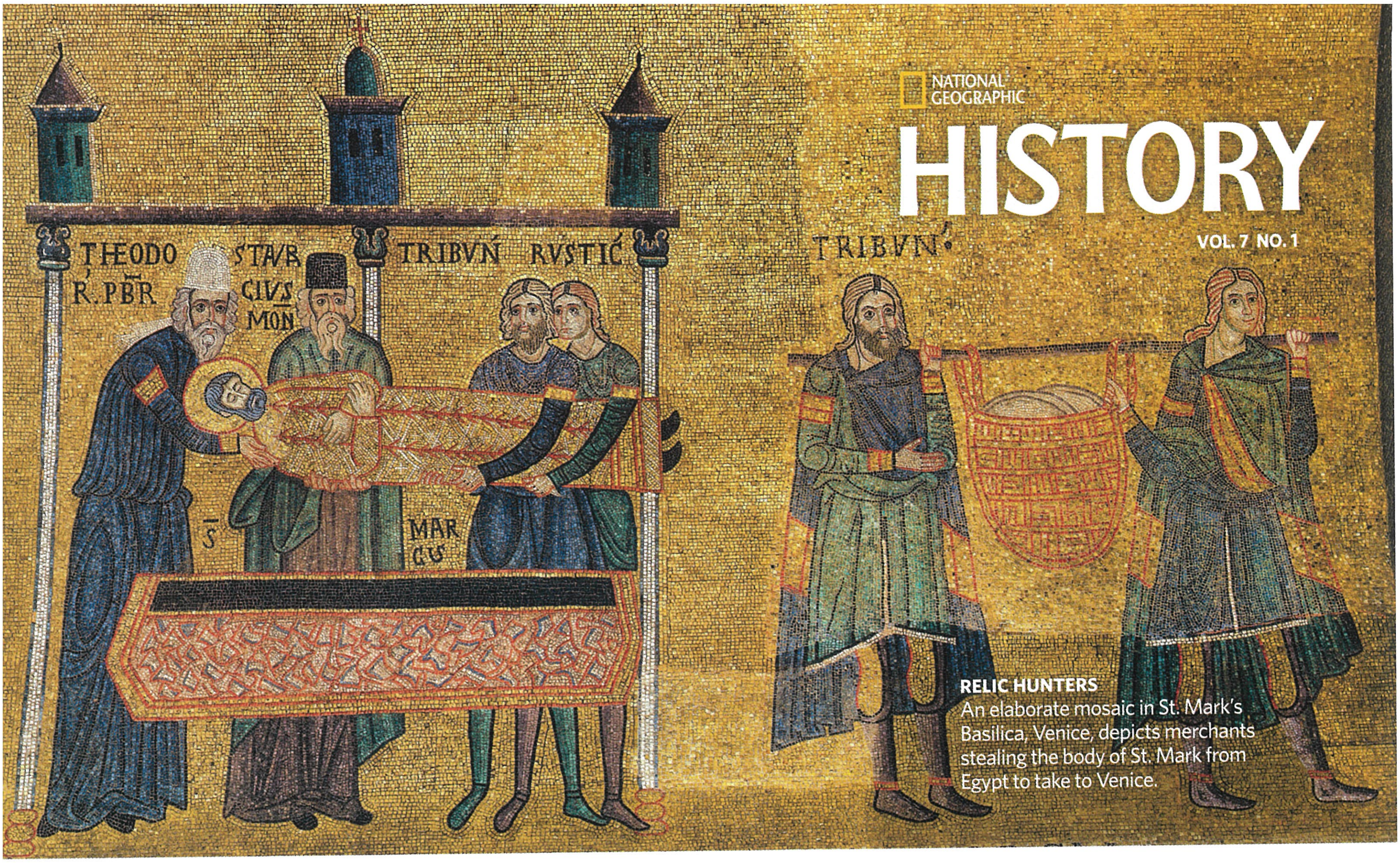

RELIC HUNTERS
An elaborate mosaic in St. Mark's Basilica, Venice, depicts merchants stealing the body of St. Mark from Egypt to take to Venice.

Features

14 Egypt's Animal Gods

They had the heads of baboons, falcons, and cows, and the bodies of bees, scorpions, and bulls. To Egyptians, the rich wildlife of the Nile Valley came to embody the gods, whose protection they sought in life and the afterlife.

28 The Call of the Celts

The discovery in 1846 of an ancient cemetery in Austria opened a window onto the early Celts, whose brilliance in war and metalwork rang through Iron Age Europe, to the fear and fascination of the Greeks and Romans.

46 Agrippina's Power Play

Rome's hardball politics was off-limits to women, but Agrippina, great-granddaughter of Augustus, considered herself a player—and paid for it. She made her son, Nero, emperor in A.D. 54, but later died at his orders.

58 The Row Over Holy Relics

Medieval churches treasured sacred relics, which attracted pilgrims who wished to venerate them. While many regarded relics with zeal, others took advantage of the faithful, filling the market with forgeries and fakes.

74 Magellan's Mixed Legacy

Dying in the Philippines 500 years ago, Ferdinand Magellan did not live to reach the Spice Islands. But his resolve helped his crew go on to complete the first circumnavigation of the globe.

THE HOPE DIAMOND SHARES A MYSTERIOUS LINK WITH THE LOST FRENCH BLUE DIAMOND.

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4 **NEWS**

The site of the church of one of the oldest Black congregations in the United States is being excavated by Colonial Williamsburg. After years of historical neglect, a re-creation of the building may join the living history museum.

6 **PROFILES**

Nellie Bly captivated newspaper readers in the late 19th century with a gripping exposé of a mental hospital and a record-setting trip around the world. One of the first investigative journalists, she broke ground for women in the field.

10 **ENIGMAS**

Stolen during the French Revolution, the French Blue's whereabouts puzzled historians and jewelers for two centuries. Thanks to a mix of serendipity and technology, the mystery of the diamond's fate has been solved.

90 **DISCOVERIES**

The Mosaic Map of Madaba is the oldest map of the Holy Land. Made in the sixth century and discovered in what is now Jordan in 1884, its accuracy has enabled archaeologists to identify finds on the ground—especially in Jerusalem.

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FIELD TECHNICIAN DÉSHONDRA DANDRIDGE CAREFULLY WORKS AT THE 19TH-CENTURY SITE OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH.

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

RESTORING AMERICAN HERITAGE

The Search to Recover a Storied Black Church

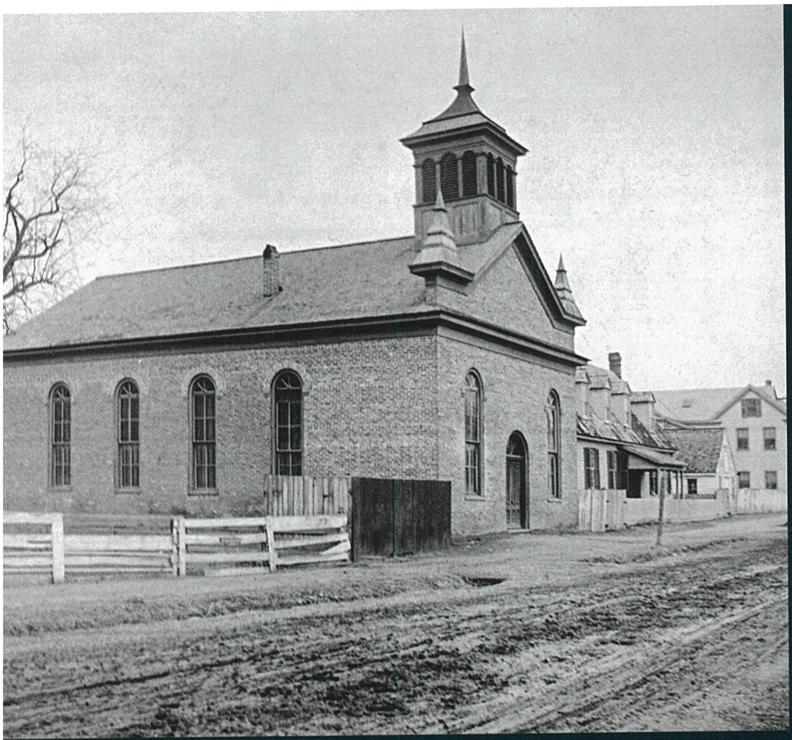
Colonial Williamsburg is excavating the 19th-century site of the First Baptist Church, where Black worshippers met more than 200 years ago.

THE FREEDOM BELL from the First Baptist Church was used in the 2016 opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., when President Barack Obama rang it.

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

In 1956 the century-old home of the First Baptist Church—one of the United States' oldest Black congregations—was demolished. The congregation would be relocating to a new home, while Colonial Williamsburg, a living-history museum in Virginia, would expand into the site on Nassau Street. They did a quick excavation of the site, but then it eventually became a parking lot. A memorial plaque was placed there in the 1980s. In 2020 Colonial Williamsburg announced that it would return to thoroughly excavate the site of the First Baptist Church, whose use as a place of worship goes back as far as 1818.

Free and enslaved Blacks began to worship in secret around 1776, gathering just outside of Williamsburg. In 1781, under the leadership of Rev. Gowan Pamphlet, an enslaved man in Williamsburg, they organized as Baptists. In the 1800s a white landowner named Jesse Cole happened by and was so moved by what

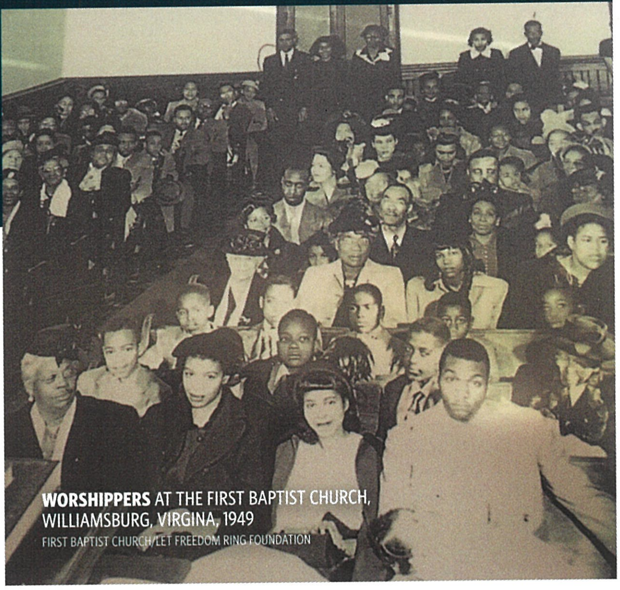


FIRST BAPTIST'S LONG HISTORY

TODAY'S MEMBERS of the First Baptist Church regard the ongoing excavation and hoped-for restoration of its early 19th-century meetinghouse as "a symbol of healing," said Connie Matthews Harshaw, who heads the foundation that works to preserve the church's history. The brick building built in the 1850s not only served as the congregation's home for a century but also played an important role in American history. In the Civil War, Confederate forces commandeered the church to serve as a hospital but were forced to abandon it as they retreated during the Battle of Williamsburg in May 1862. In 1863, after President Abraham Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation that freed enslaved people in rebel states, a school to teach newly free Black Americans opened in the church building. "This isn't just about a little church in Williamsburg," said Harshaw. "It's about a national treasure."

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH on Nassau Street, in Williamsburg, Virginia, served as the home for one of the oldest continuous congregations in the United States. The original structure, built around 1818, was destroyed in the 1830s when the African Baptist Church (as it was called then) had as many as 600 members. A new brick building (photographed in 1901, above) was dedicated in 1856.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER JR. LIBRARY, COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION



WORSHIPPERS AT THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINA, 1949

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH/LET FREEDOM RING FOUNDATION

he heard that he offered his carriage house in town. A tornado damaged the meetinghouse in 1834. The congregation met in temporary premises until 1856, when a sturdy brick building was built which would serve as the Baptist church's meeting place until the 1950s.

An American Story

Even though a new place of worship was built at a different location, "We want to put the story of the church back on the actual site," said Jack Gary, director of archaeology at Colonial Williamsburg.

Connie Matthews Harshaw, president of the First Baptist Church's Let Freedom Ring Foundation, which works to preserve and share its history, said the ideal outcome would be "to find enough of the 1818 structure to restore it, and create interpretive programs to tell the story of the church and how it formed a part of colonial America."

Telling that story is long overdue. Colonial Williamsburg, created in the early and mid-1900s, "basically erased everything that has to do with African Americans," said Harshaw, who noted that the Black population amounted to a little over half of the colonial town. In contrast with the 1950s excavation, when "maybe the story of the church wasn't of interest," Gary said, the current work involves a close collaboration between the museum and Harshaw's foundation.

The first digging session has yielded valuable finds, including at least two burials, more than 12,000 artifacts, and signs of a foundation that may be the original 1818 meetinghouse. The congregation's rich oral history has been vital, added Gary, and helped point the way to the burial locations. "This project is an example of the work that is still needed to tell the whole story—not Black or white, but the American story," said Harshaw. ■

Nellie Bly, Pioneer of Investigative Journalism

The trailblazing reporter took on the male world of newspapers to expose injustice, travel around the world, and become the United States' first celebrity journalist.

Making Headlines

1885

At age 21, Nellie Bly starts working as a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* and travels to Mexico as a foreign correspondent.

1887

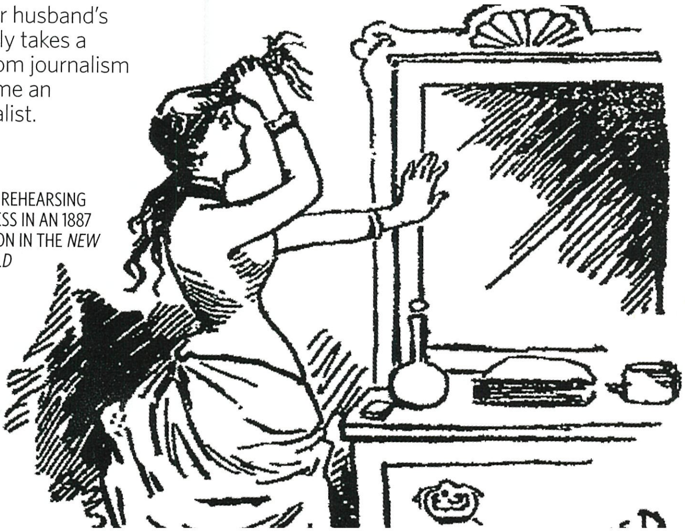
Reporting for the *New York World,* Bly covertly infiltrates an asylum, and pens a story that prompts needed reforms.

1889-1890

Bly's record-breaking race around the world, covered daily in the *New York World,* makes her an international star.

1904

After her husband's death, Bly takes a break from journalism to become an industrialist.



NELLIE BLY REHEARSING HER MADNESS IN AN 1887 ILLUSTRATION IN THE *NEW YORK WORLD*

ALAMY/ACI

In 1885 the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* published an article entitled "What Girls Are Good For," which claimed a working woman was "a monstrosity." The feature provoked a fiery rebuke from a 21-year-old reader, Elizabeth Jane Cochran, whose argument so impressed the editor that he published an advertisement asking the author to come forward so he could meet her.

She did, and he hired her on the spot, her first article appearing under the name "Orphan Girl." Soon after, she changed her pen name to the title of a popular song by Pittsburgh songwriter Stephen Foster, and so "Nellie Bly" was born—a name forever associated with her pioneering role in investigative journalism.

In the course of her life, she spotlighted social ills and corruption, often at great personal risk, resulting in important reforms. Distinguishing herself in the almost exclusively male world of late 19th-century journalism, she broke new ground for women in the field.

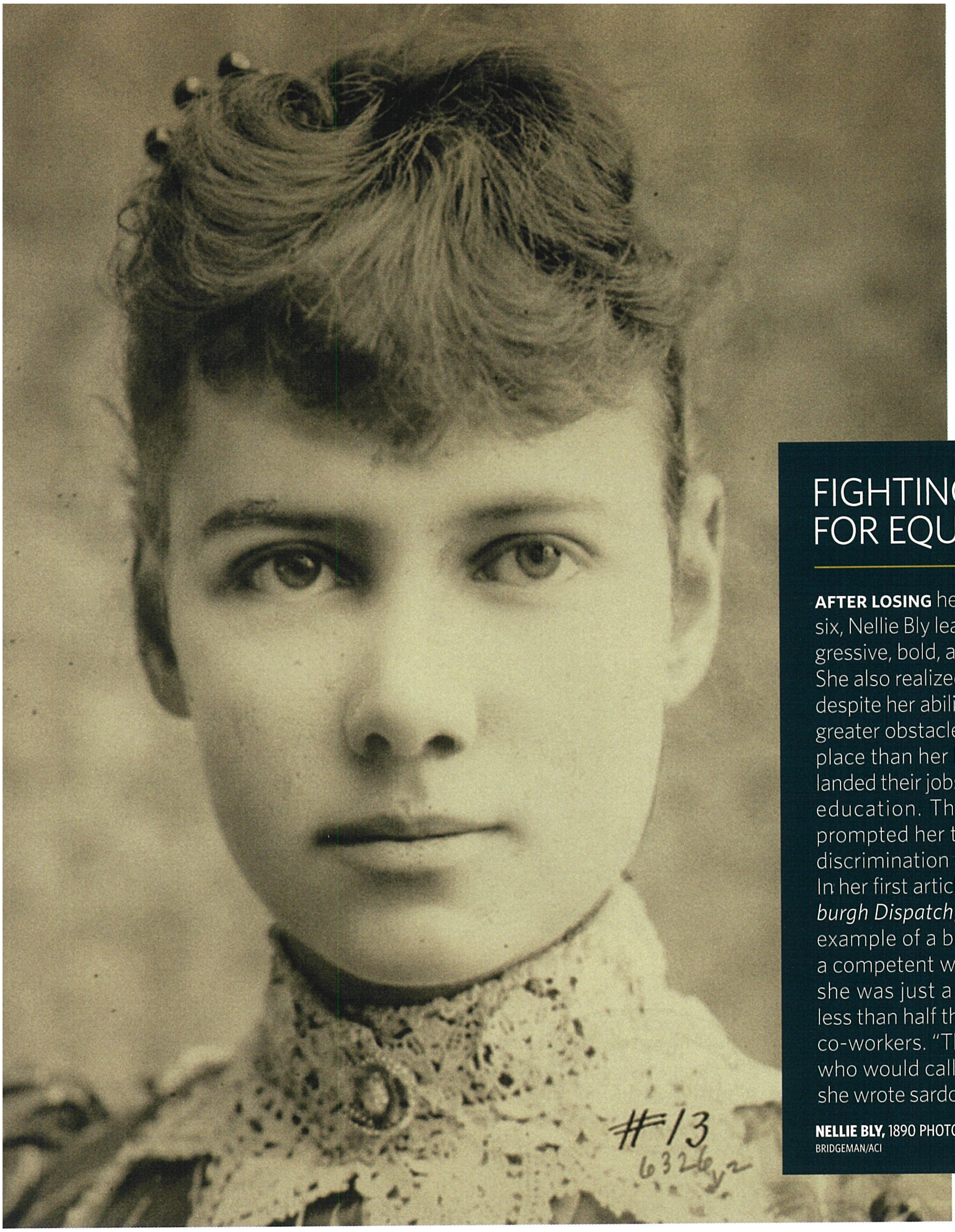
Cub Reporter

Bly—who would refer to herself by her pen name, even in her private life—had originally written as "Orphan Girl" in a reference to her difficult upbringing. Born in 1864 near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she grew up in relative comfort until her father's death when she was six years old. Money became tight, especially after her mother's abusive second marriage ended in divorce. At 15, Bly ended her formal education, for lack of funds, to run a boardinghouse with her mother for five years. These years of struggle fed her ambition to succeed and a commitment as a journalist to call attention to the hardships of working-class families.

Despite clinching her job on the *Dispatch,* Bly resented being restricted to writing only for the women's section of the paper. Frustrated, she went to Mexico alone to work as a correspondent, a virtually unheard-of step for a woman in the 1880s. She covered a range of topics, but those that singled out corruption and exploitation of peasants and workers provoked the ire of the authoritarian government. She was forced to leave to avoid arrest, and back in Pittsburgh found herself reassigned to the women's section at the *Dispatch.* Disillusioned, she decided to leave for the big leagues: New York.

Going Undercover

Bly arrived in the metropolis at a dramatic time for journalism: New York newspapers were looking for creative ways to increase their circulation with



FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY

AFTER LOSING her father at age six, Nellie Bly learned to be aggressive, bold, and self-reliant. She also realized early on that despite her abilities, she faced greater obstacles in the workplace than her brothers, who landed their jobs with minimal education. This unfairness prompted her to address the discrimination women faced. In her first article for the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, she made an example of a boss who hired a competent woman but, "as she was just a girl," paid her less than half that of her male co-workers. "There are those who would call this equality," she wrote sardonically.

NELLIE BLY, 1890 PHOTOGRAPH

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

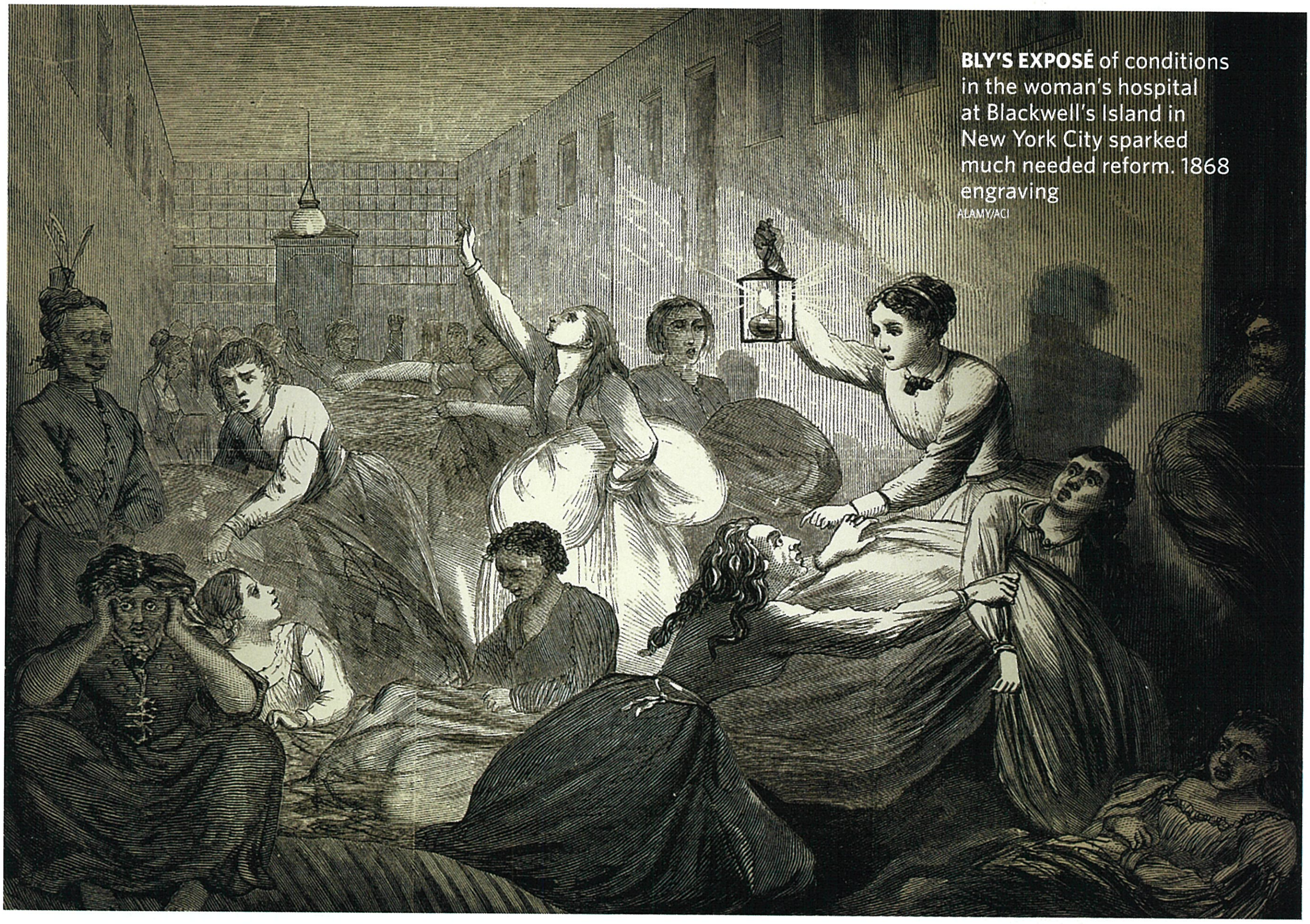
sensational stories to grab readers. After allegedly bluffing her way into their offices, Bly secured a position at the *New York World,* whose owner Joseph Pulitzer had a meaty assignment lined up for his new reporter.

Pulitzer assigned a story in which Bly would pretend to be mentally ill to get herself committed to the New York City Lunatic Asylum at Blackwell's Island (now Roosevelt Island) in New York's East River. She would then write an exposé of conditions in the women's ward. "How will they get me out?" she asked him. "First get in," he said.

Bly moved to a boardinghouse and began her performance. Posing as a Cuban immigrant named "Nellie Brown," she wandered the house, ranted, and yelled. The police were called, and doctors certified that she was "demented." A judge had her admitted to Bellevue Hospital psychiatric ward, where the initial diagnosis was confirmed, and she was then transferred to the wards on Blackwell's Island.

Bly quickly observed that the mentally ill lived alongside other women who were institutionalized there despite being healthy. Some were recent immigrants caught up in the legal system and unable to communicate, while others were committed simply for being poor, with no family to support them. To Bly, the asylum seemed less a hospital than a warehouse for the unfortunate.

Built for 1,000 patients, it held 1,600 with only 16 doctors and ill-trained, often brutal, staff. Food and sanitary



BLY'S EXPOSÉ of conditions in the woman's hospital at Blackwell's Island in New York City sparked much needed reform. 1868 engraving

ALAMY/ACI

conditions were horrific. Worse still, none of the women were given the chance to prove their sanity. "Compare this with a criminal, who is given every chance to prove his innocence," she would write.

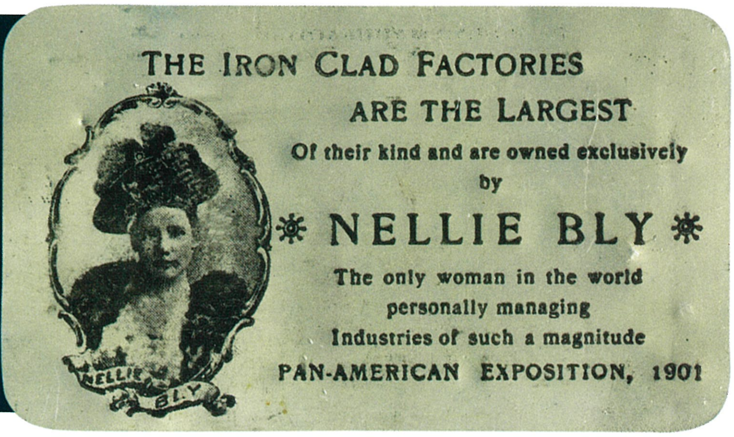
After 10 days, the newspaper's lawyer arranged her release. Her account of the experience, published in two parts by the *World* in October 1887, shocked the public and triggered a grand jury investigation, which led to increased funding and improved conditions for patients in psychiatric wards.

One of the first examples of undercover investigation in American journalism, the two-part report made Bly a star. From then on, headlines for her stories at the *World* often used her name as a selling point, such as "Nellie Bly Buys a Baby," an investigation into the sale of infants, or "Nellie Bly Tells How It Feels to Be a White Slave," about underpaid women workers in a box factory. In another story, she set up a lobbyist who bribed state legislators on behalf of clients. "I was a lobbyist last week,"

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

A GROUNDBREAKING INDUSTRIALIST, Bly became the sole owner of her husband's enamelware factory after his death. She took on the role diligently, developing several products and improving workplace conditions. She also displayed her flair for self-promotion, as seen in this business card, made for the Pan-American Exposition of 1901.

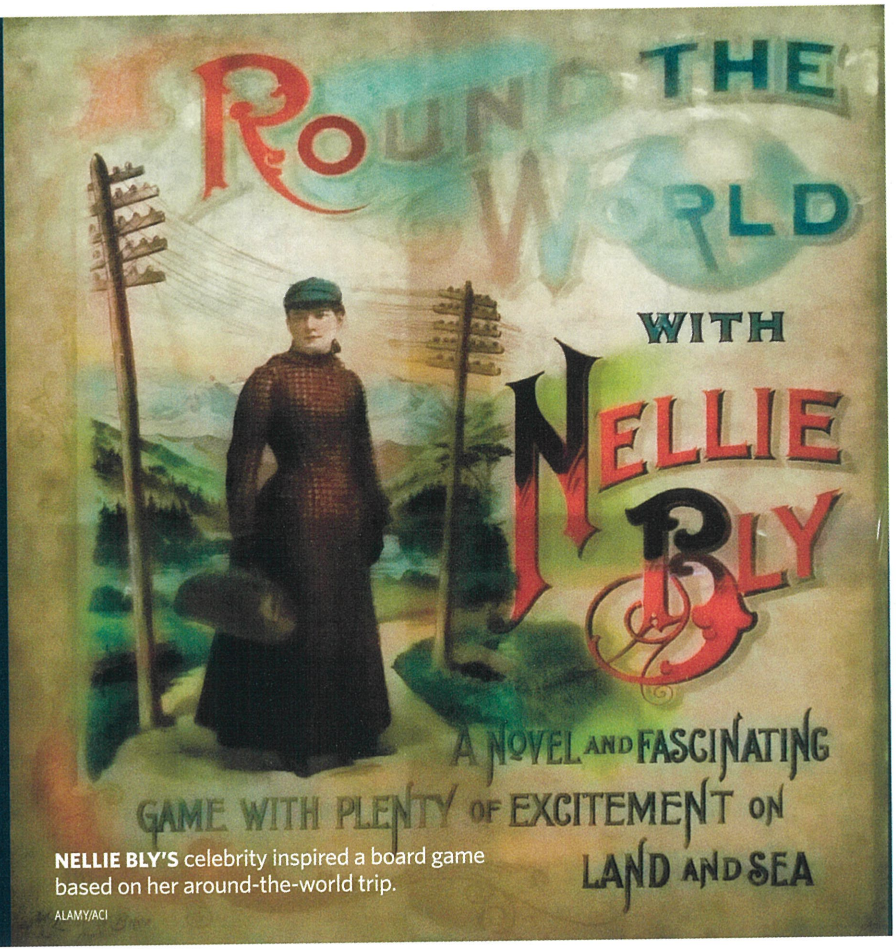
ALAMY



THE IRON CLAD FACTORIES
ARE THE LARGEST
Of their kind and are owned exclusively
by
✻ NELLIE BLY ✻
The only woman in the world
personally managing
Industries of such a magnitude
PAN-AMERICAN EXPOSITION, 1901

RACING AROUND THE WORLD

NELLIE BLY managed to circumnavigate the world in just 72 days, eight less than Jules Verne's fictitious hero, Phileas Fogg, who inspired the feat. On train, ship, rickshaw, horse, and donkey, Nellie passed through London, Amiens, Suez, Singapore, Hong Kong, Yokohama, and San Francisco before returning to New Jersey in 1890. Readers of the *New York World* followed her adventures daily and placed bets on the number of days it would take. Bly defeated journalist Elizabeth Bisland, sent by the magazine *Cosmopolitan,* in a race that boosted the *World*'s readership and advertising revenues.


ROUND THE WORLD
WITH
NELLIE BLY
A NOVEL AND FASCINATING GAME WITH PLENTY OF EXCITEMENT ON LAND AND SEA

NELLIE BLY'S celebrity inspired a board game based on her around-the-world trip.

ALAMY/ACI

the story began. "I went up to Albany to catch a professional briber in the act. I did so." The lobbyist fled town.

Globe-Trotter

Recognizing the huge commercial success of Bly's work to date, other American newspapers scrambled to hire their own "stunt girls." But Bly stood out because "along with derring-do and excitement, she had a social agenda that was always present in her work," according to Brooke Kroeger, author of *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist.*

In fall 1889, as the *World* opened new headquarters, Pulitzer wanted a big, attention-grabbing story. Bly proposed an around-the-world race to break the fictional record set by Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's 1873 novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Pulitzer thought the idea better suited to a man. "Very well," Bly said, "Start the man, and I'll start the same day for some other newspaper and beat him." Pulitzer wisely reconsidered.

Bly set off from Hoboken, New Jersey, on November 14, 1889. Among her many adventures was a meeting with Jules Verne in France. Verne, age 61, told her: "If you do it in 79 days, I shall applaud with both hands." She would win his applause handily, completing the trip in a record-breaking 72 days. When she stepped off the train in Jersey City, thousands cheered her. At 25, she was America's first celebrity journalist.

Her book *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* was published soon after, joining her other books based on her reporting: *Ten Days in a Madhouse* (1887) and *Six Months in Mexico* (1888). Her literary success did not carry over into fiction, however, with the 1889 publication of *The Mystery of Central Park,* being her one and only novel.

In 1895, at 30, Bly married 72-year-old Robert Seaman, the millionaire manufacturer of kitchen enamelware and other products at Iron Clad Manufacturing Co. She did some part-time reporting up until his death in 1904, when she began a 10-year hiatus from journalism to run the company. Business thrived; she even took out patents, but embezzling accountants drove the enterprise into bankruptcy.

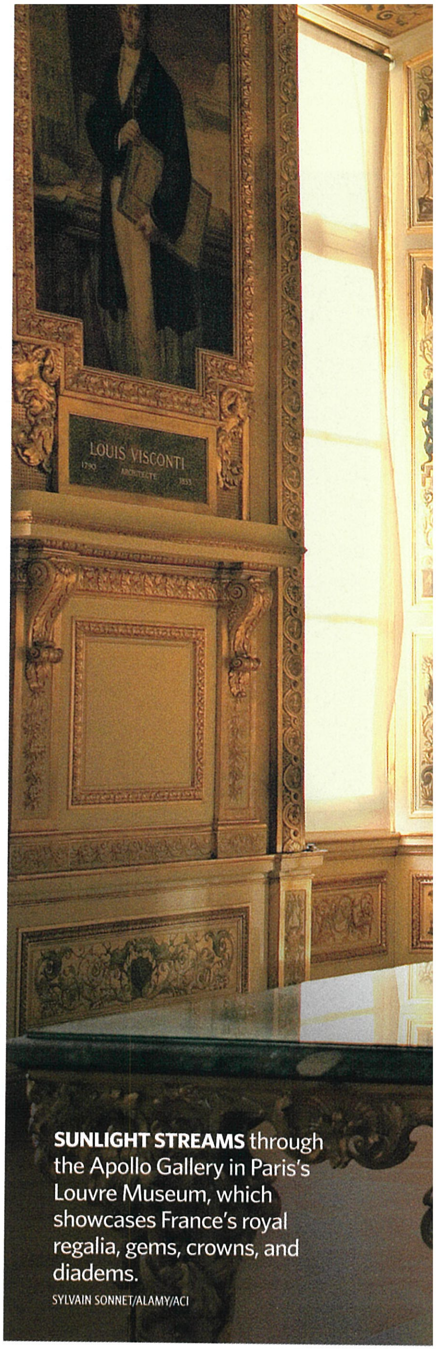
In 1914 Bly went to Austria, partly to seek financing for her company. During four years there, she became the first woman correspondent on the eastern front during World War I. Back in New York, she continued writing for the press, using her column to help people find work and housing.

In January 1922 Bly died of pneumonia in New York; she was 57 years old. In the decades following her death, investigative journalism and reporting have changed drastically. Bly's persistence and pioneering opened up new frontiers for news and the people who report it.

—*Giorgio Pirazzini*

Mystery of the Blue Diamond—The Final Cut

What happened to the priceless French Blue following its dramatic theft in Paris in 1792? A spate of recent clues has enabled scholars to solve this most dazzling of whodunits.



SUNLIGHT STREAMS through the Apollo Gallery in Paris's Louvre Museum, which showcases France's royal regalia, gems, crowns, and diadems.

SYLVAIN SONNET/ALAMY/ACI

Known by awed gemologists simply as "the Blue," the world's biggest blue diamond first vanished in a jewel heist during the turmoil of revolutionary Paris in 1792. Since then, it has resurfaced and disappeared several times around Europe and across the Atlantic. Historians and jewelers have finally ended this treasure hunt that lasted more than two centuries.

Most diamonds are prized for colorlessness, but this remarkable gem stood out for its distinctive deep blue hue. Discovered in India and brought to France in the 17th century, the stone measured a whopping 115 carats—a rare heavyweight in gemological terms.

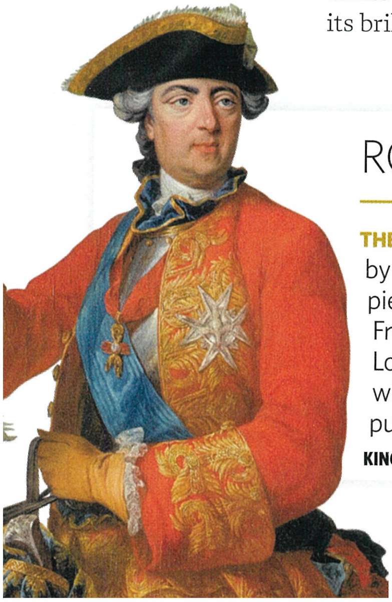
The diamond came to the attention of France's Louis XIV, who bought it in 1668. To craft a fitting symbol for the Sun King, Louis had it cut, reducing it to 69 carats but intensifying its brilliance. He had it mounted in a distinctive gold setting that created a sunburst effect reflected in the stone. His great-grandson Louis XV had "le Bleu" set into an elaborate insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece, a Catholic chivalric order, around 1749.

Banditry and Bribery

Forty years later, after France was engulfed in revolution, King Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette were arrested in 1791 while trying to flee the country. With the monarchs imprisoned, the French Royal Treasury was turned over to the nascent government. In mid-September 1792, as a wave of rioting engulfed Paris, thieves broke into the Royal Storehouse, the Garde-Meuble, and stole most of the French Crown Jewels over the course of five nights.

One of the thieves, Cadet Guillot Lordonner, left Paris with the insignia of the Golden Fleece. He removed the French Blue from the setting along with the Côte de Bretagne spinel, a red gemstone carved in the shape of a dragon. Once in London, he tried unsuccessfully to sell the Côte de Bretagne to exiled French monarchists and ended up in debtors' prison. The Côte de Bretagne would rejoin the French Crown Jewels, along with a good portion of the stolen loot, but the French Blue had vanished.

Some chroniclers believe that the French Blue didn't go to London with Lordonner. Instead, it arrived much later in a scenario worthy of a political thriller. According to this theory, the revolutionary armies desperately needed a victory around the time Austria and Prussia were



ROYAL COLLECTION

THE CROWN JEWELS OF FRANCE were first established in 1530 by King Francis I, but this original collection dwindled as pieces were sold when the crown needed money. When France was flush with funds in the 1600 and 1700s, King Louis XIV and Louis XV (left) reinvigorated the collection, which survived until the 1870s, when the French Third Republic decided to break it up and sell many of the jewels.

KING LOUIS XV, PORTRAIT, 1763. PALACE OF VERSAILLES

G. BLOT/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

threatening to invade France in 1792. Led by the Prussian Duke of Brunswick, an invasion was repelled by the French at Valmy and retreated back over the Rhine on September 20. Revolutionary momentum returned and fervor soared.

Skeptics questioned how an experienced and well-equipped Prussian general could be defeated so quickly. They theorized that revolutionary leaders had orchestrated the jewel heist earlier that month in order to bribe the Duke of Brunswick. They would give him the French Blue in return for losing the battle at Valmy. Theorists suspect that years later Brunswick sent the Blue to his daughter, Princess Caroline, in London in 1805.

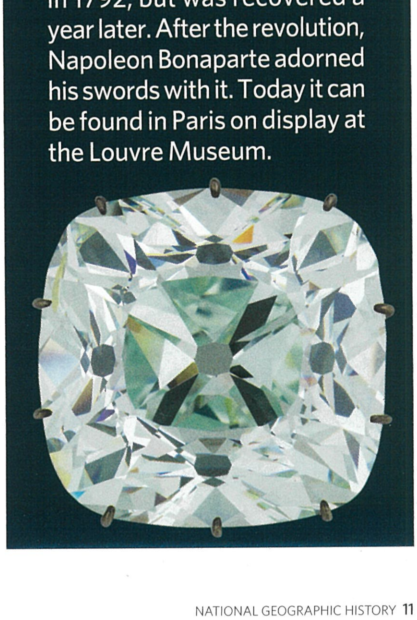
New Identity

In 1812 a blue diamond smaller than the famous French gem passed through the hands of a London dealer named Daniel Eliason. How he acquired it, and to whom he sold it, is a mystery. Eliason showed the stone to the jeweler John Francillon, who made a sketch and described a 45.52-carat "deep blue" diamond "without specks or flaws." Historians believe it is no coincidence that it reappeared two days after the window for prosecuting crimes committed during the French Revolution expired, perhaps encouraging its owner to sell it.

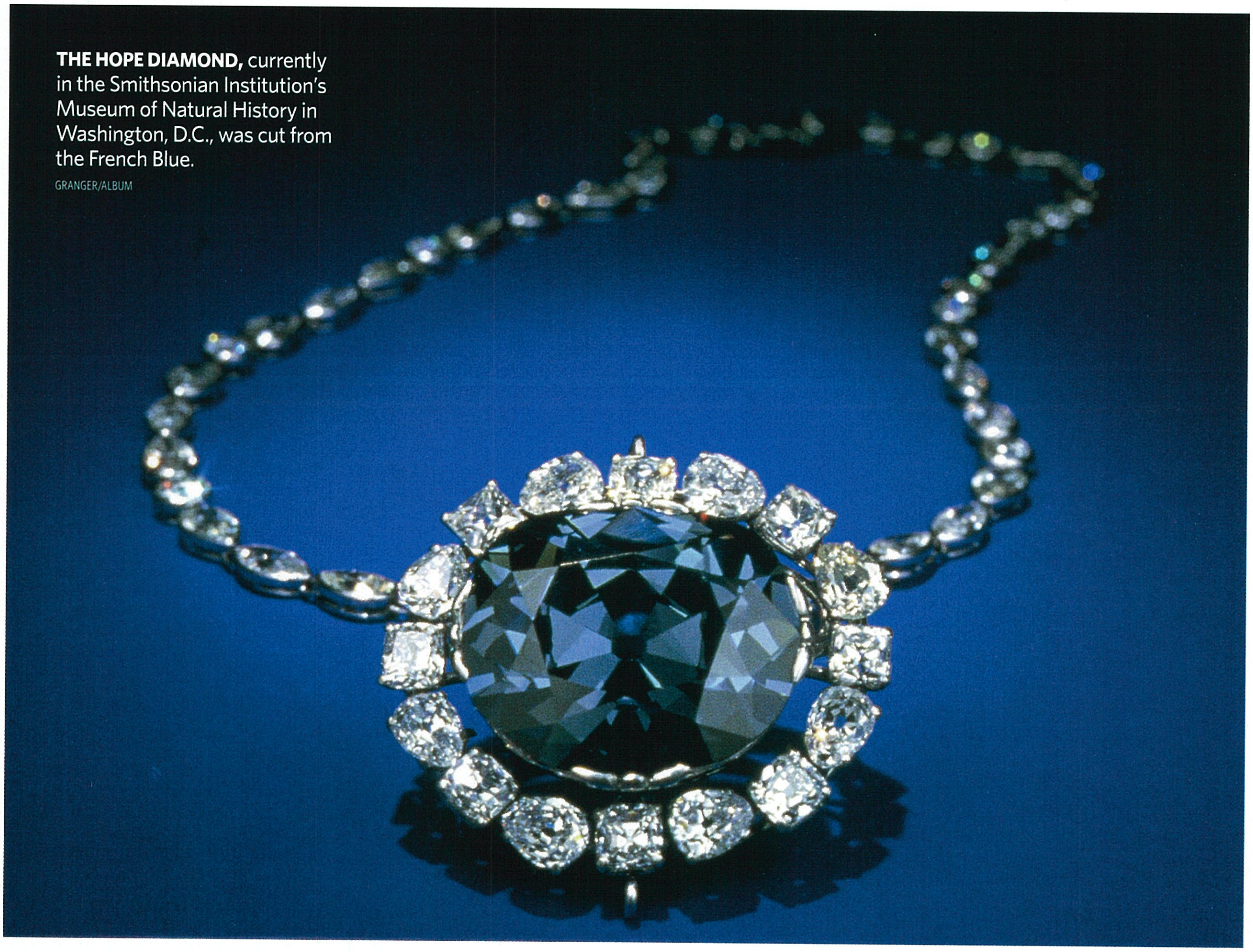
Of the same quality but smaller than the French Blue, this "new" blue diamond vanished again until 1839, when records

THE REGENT THAT RULES

ONE OF THE WORLD'S few flawless diamonds, the so-called Regent was added to France's crown jewels in 1717 by the Duke of Orleans, regent of France for Louis XV. It was among the treasures stolen in 1792, but was recovered a year later. After the revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte adorned his swords with it. Today it can be found in Paris on display at the Louvre Museum.



STÉPHANE MARÉCHELLE/RMN



THE HOPE DIAMOND, currently in the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., was cut from the French Blue.

GRANGER/ALBUM

show it in the collection of banker Henry Philip Hope, for whom it would be named.

The Hope family sold the blue diamond in 1901, and it eventually came into the collection of American heiress Evalyn Walsh McLean in 1912. After her death in 1947, jeweler Harry Winston purchased her jewels, and donated the Hope Diamond to the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History in 1958.

Scholars have long suspected that the Hope Diamond and the lost French Blue were one and the same. It wasn't until 2005, 213 years after its theft, that they were able to prove it. Jeffrey Post, Smithsonian curator of the National Gem Collection, and other experts, ran a computer modeling study based on 17th-century accounts, detailed drawings of the French Blue, and scans of the Hope. Their study concluded that the Hope is the original Indian blue, following two re-cuttings.

In 2007 a lead cast of a shield-shaped diamond was found in the Museum of Natural History in Paris and determined to be a model of the French Blue. François Farges, a curator at the Museum of Natural History, wrote that the 19th-century catalog label found with the cast gives a clue to the French Blue's fate. It reads "belonging to Mr. Hoppe of London," suggesting that Henry Philip Hope acquired the French Blue before it was cut to create the smaller stone.

The cast provided the exact dimensions of the lost gem which allowed for an accurate computer reconstruction. Using this information and data from earlier studies, scientists were able to solve the mystery and confirm that the Hope Diamond was indeed once the French Blue.

—María Pilar Queralt del Hierro

Evalyn Walsh McLean, who bought the Hope Diamond in 1912, wore it frequently to high-society gatherings.

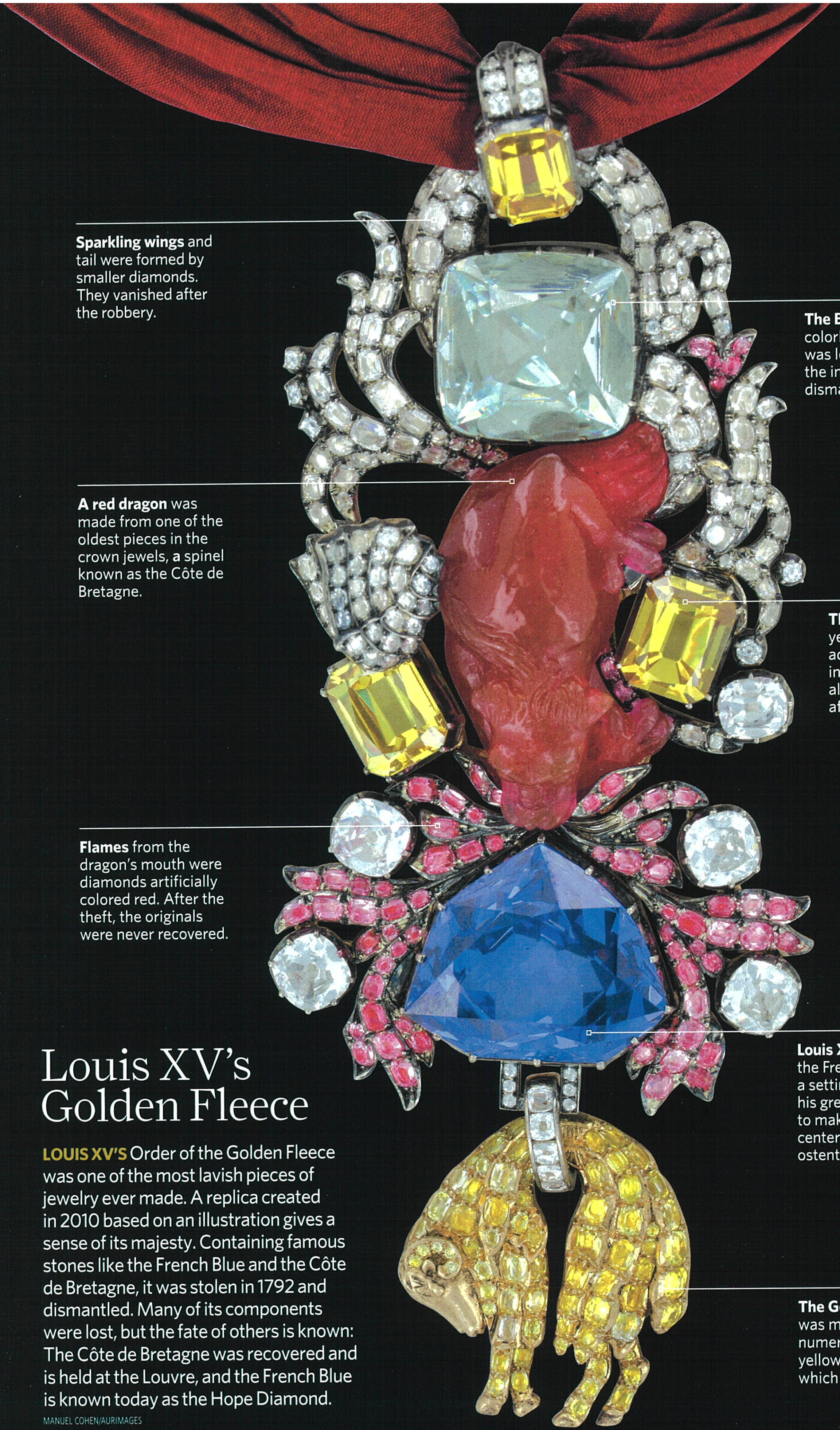
EVALYN WALSH MCLEAN, AMERICAN HEIRESS, WEARING THE HOPE DIAMOND, CIRCA 1920

GRANGER/ALBUM

Louis XV's Golden Fleece

LOUIS XV'S Order of the Golden Fleece was one of the most lavish pieces of jewelry ever made. A replica created in 2010 based on an illustration gives a sense of its majesty. Containing famous stones like the French Blue and the Côte de Bretagne, it was stolen in 1792 and dismantled. Many of its components were lost, but the fate of others is known: The Côte de Bretagne was recovered and is held at the Louvre, and the French Blue is known today as the Hope Diamond.

MANUEL COHEN/AURIMAGES



Sparkling wings and tail were formed by smaller diamonds. They vanished after the robbery.

The Bezu, a 32-carat colorless diamond, was lost after the insignia was dismantled.

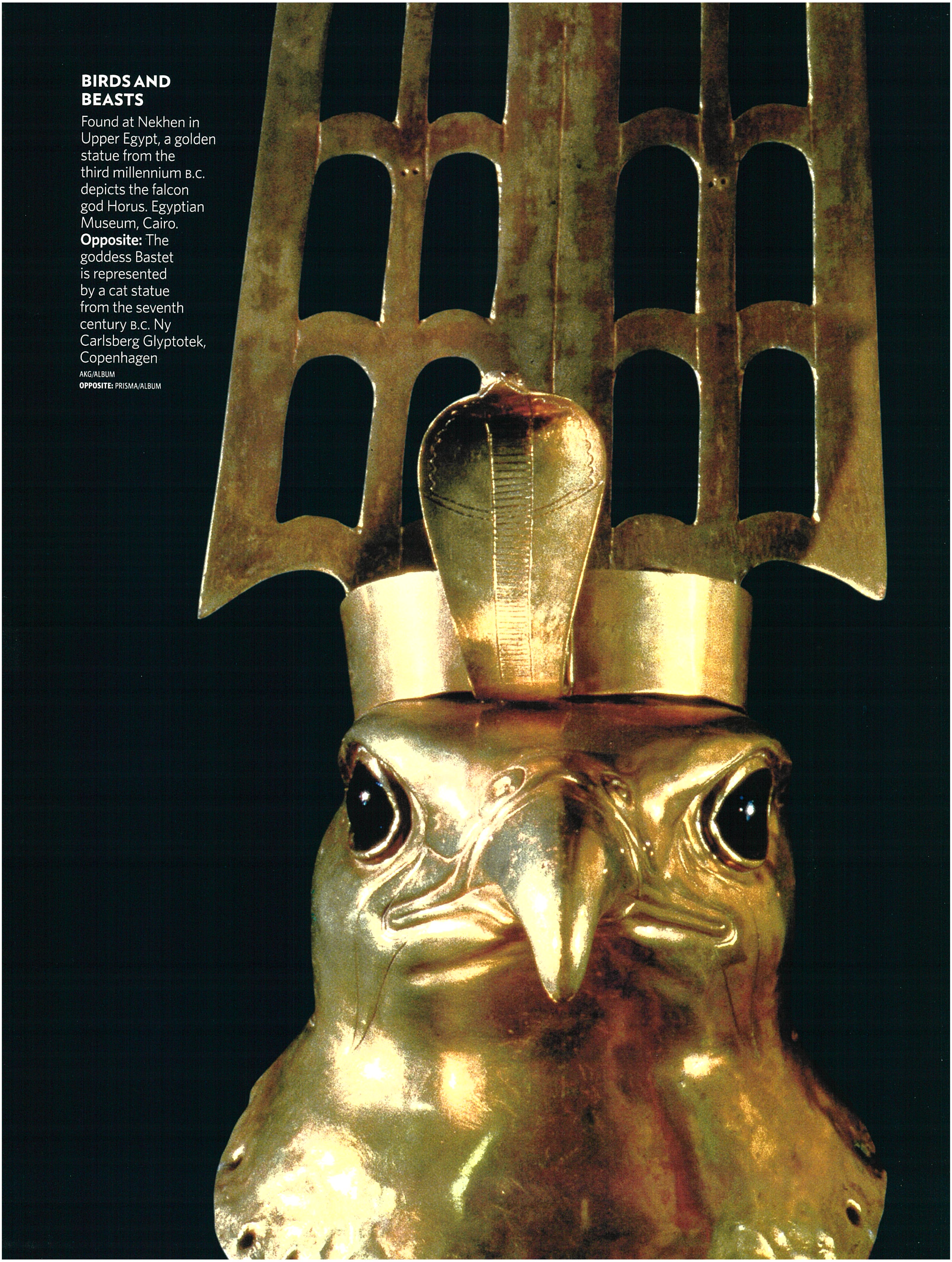
A red dragon was made from one of the oldest pieces in the crown jewels, a spinel known as the Côte de Bretagne.

Three 10-carat yellow sapphires adorned the insignia. These also vanished after the theft.

Flames from the dragon's mouth were diamonds artificially colored red. After the theft, the originals were never recovered.

Louis XV removed the French Blue from a setting created for his great-grandfather to make it the centerpiece of this ostentatious insignia.

The Golden Fleece was made with numerous small yellow diamonds, which were lost.



BIRDS AND BEASTS

Found at Nekhen in Upper Egypt, a golden statue from the third millennium B.C. depicts the falcon god Horus. Egyptian Museum, Cairo. **Opposite:** The goddess Bastet is represented by a cat statue from the seventh century B.C. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

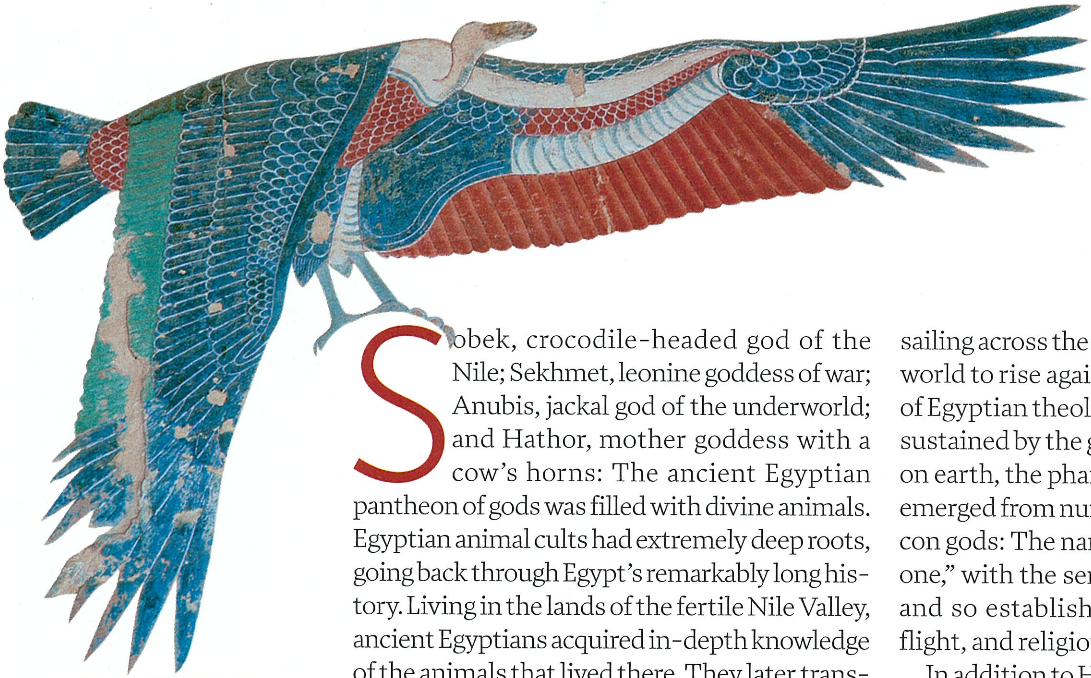
AKG/ALBUM
OPPOSITE: PRISMA/ALBUM

EGYPT'S SACRED ANIMALS

DIVINE MENAGERIE

From birds and reptiles to cats and dogs, many gods in ancient Egypt took animal form, captured in 3,000 years of exquisite art and sculpture.

ELISA CASTEL



PROTECTING EGYPT

Nekhbet, the vulture goddess, was a protectress of royalty. The image above is from a 15th-century B.C. mortuary temple of Hatshepsut near the Valley of the Kings.

AKG/ALBUM

Sobek, crocodile-headed god of the Nile; Sekhmet, leonine goddess of war; Anubis, jackal god of the underworld; and Hathor, mother goddess with a cow's horns: The ancient Egyptian pantheon of gods was filled with divine animals. Egyptian animal cults had extremely deep roots, going back through Egypt's remarkably long history. Living in the lands of the fertile Nile Valley, ancient Egyptians acquired in-depth knowledge of the animals that lived there. They later transferred these animals and their characteristics to the divine realm, so by the dawn of dynastic Egypt in 3100 B.C., the gods were taking animal forms.

Ancient Egyptian belief generated such exuberant creations as the scorpion goddess Selket; the baboon-headed (or sometimes ibis-headed) god of learning, Thoth; and Bes, a deity of the household and everyday pleasures, often depicted as comically ugly, with wings, and attributes of a lion or other beasts. The Egyptian pantheon can appear bewildering, but it's important to keep in mind that Egyptian cosmology lasted for millennia. As the kingdoms of Egypt changed over time, so too would its deities shift, evolve, and sometimes blend. The falcon-headed Horus's very early role as a solar deity would be merged into Re, who was also often depicted as a falcon. Re then merges with other gods, including Horus himself, to create a Re-Horus composite god, Re-Harakhty, who is also falcon-headed.

Transformations

By the time the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza was built in the mid-third millennium B.C., gods and goddesses were taking on an array of animal forms. One of the most ancient was Horus the Elder. Horus was represented as a man's body with a falcon's head. Although he became associated with the sky, in very early iconography he is also shown in a solar bark. This vessel, sailing across the sky and down into the underworld to rise again at dawn, was a central tenet of Egyptian theology; it affirmed cosmic order, sustained by the gods, and their representative on earth, the pharaoh. Horus is known to have emerged from numerous ancient avian and falcon gods: The name Horus means "the distant one," with the sense of the one who flies high, and so establishing the link between birds, flight, and religious awe.

In addition to Horus's falcon form, male gods were depicted in the form of bulls and rams. In Egypt's bull cult, the divine aspect centered not on a species, but on an individual. The ritual of Apis, as an individual bull, dates to the Old Kingdom (2575-2150 B.C.), where he would be set to run in his home city of Memphis, symbolically fertilizing the land. When an Apis bull died, his body was interred at nearby Saqqara. Then the search would begin for his successor, which had to display specific markings on his coat. On proclamation as the new Apis bull, he was brought to the temple in Memphis and given his own "harem" of cows.

Power shifts often led to a geographical shift, such as in the New Kingdom period (1539-1075 B.C.), when pharaonic power moved from Memphis to Thebes. This shift had a theological impact, elevating the deity Amun to the position of state god, worshipped in Theban temples, such as Karnak. Often represented in his merged form with Re, Amun-Re is shown as a ram.

Amun's ram associations go very far back to the ancient Egyptian god Khnum, creator of human beings. Amun is often referred to as the "god of two horns." Rams were linked with fertility and war, making him a powerful protector figure for the New Kingdom pharaohs.

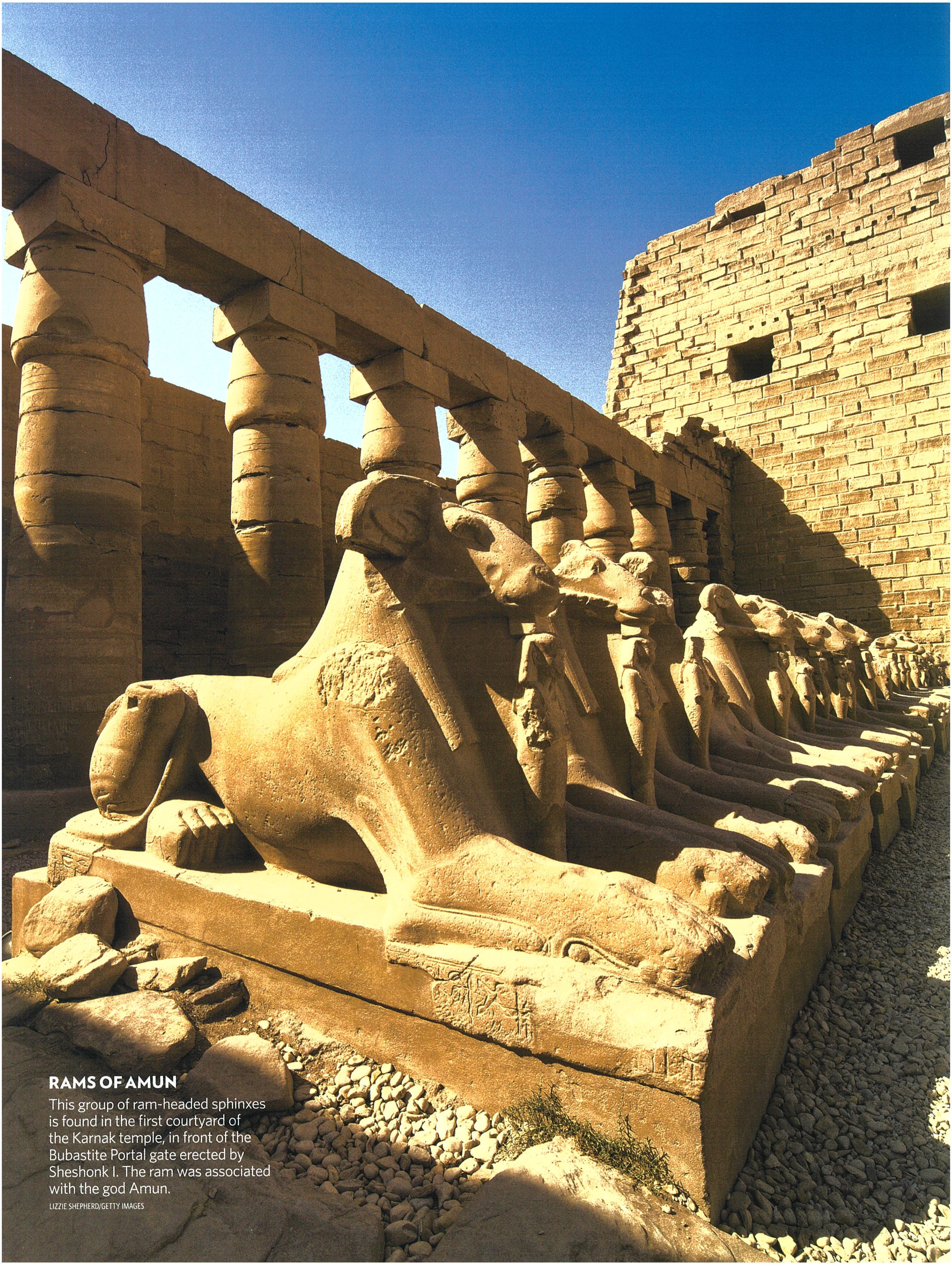
Mother Goddesses

Early goddesses were often responsible for things associated with life and reproduction,

Falcons, cows, snakes, and felines are the most common manifestations of ancient Egyptian dieties.

COBRA GODDESS NETJER-ANKH, GILDED WOODEN FIGURE, 14TH CENTURY B.C., TOMB OF TUTANKHAMUN. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

UIG/ALBUM



RAMS OF AMUN

This group of ram-headed sphinxes is found in the first courtyard of the Karnak temple, in front of the Bubastite Portal gate erected by Sheshonk I. The ram was associated with the god Amun.

LIZZIE SHEPHERD/GETTY IMAGES

GOD OF THE HEARTH

This statuette of the winged household deity Bes is from the reign of Psamtik I, a pharaoh from the seventh century B.C. Louvre Museum, Paris

DEA/SCALA, FLORENCE

As the kingdoms of Egypt changed over time, so too would its deities shift, evolve, and sometimes blend.

including birth, fertility, and nourishment. Some of the earliest goddesses were shown with a cow's head or horns. Bat, for example, is depicted with the horns of a cow on the Narmer Palette, an important artifact from circa 3100 B.C. that commemorated the unification of Egypt as a country. Over time, Bat seems to have evolved into another very powerful early Egyptian goddess, Hathor, who exerted influence in numerous areas of life, including motherhood, music, agriculture, pleasure, and even death.

Although she was known as "the golden one," and would blaze brightly throughout centuries, Hathor's role would be subsumed by the rise in importance of Isis. Usually depicted as a human female without overt animalistic traits, Isis demonstrated her animal ties in a more subtle way: She was often depicted with cow's horns atop her head, a visual nod to Hathor. Isis would, in time, take over Hathor's responsibilities, especially as a universal symbol of the Egyptian mother and wife in her role as consort and protector of the lord of the underworld, Osiris.

Dogs and Cats

Among the world's most popular pets, dogs and cats also played prominent roles in Egyptian mythology, appearing in the Egyptian pantheon. An important deity who served the god Osiris in the underworld was the jackal-headed god of mummification, Anubis, whose role overlapped with—and later eclipsed—the jackal god Wepwawet. Historians believe that powerful canine dogs, acting in the interests of the dead, were the best protection against the jackals of the natural world, whose habit of digging up the recently buried struck fear into the hearts of Egyptians.

Feline goddesses are a popular attraction at many museums today. Some of their cults were first associated with specific cities, but as their fame spread, they became associated with similar local deities. In Memphis, for example, an important feline goddess was Sekhmet, a goddess of war. She was depicted with the head of a lioness because of her association with the desert and ferocity.

Sekhmet was a favorite of the pharaoh Amenhotep III, who commissioned hundreds of stone statues of the goddess—as many as 730—for his massive mortuary temple, built in the 14th century B.C. at Thebes. Egyptologists have theorized that the pharaoh had so many artworks commissioned both to pacify the goddess's fearsome qualities and to attract her protective nature.

Sometimes confused with Sekhmet, another feline goddess was Bastet, whose cult was centered in Bubastis in lower Egypt. Sometimes depicted as Mau, a divine cat manifestation of Re, she is shown, knife in paw, slaying an evil snake, Apophis. Fierce and friendly, these two feline goddesses became associated with each other, embodying the contradictions of cats' personalities. In time, compensating for Sekhmet's fury, Bastet became her binary opposite, representing a gentle, nurturing side.

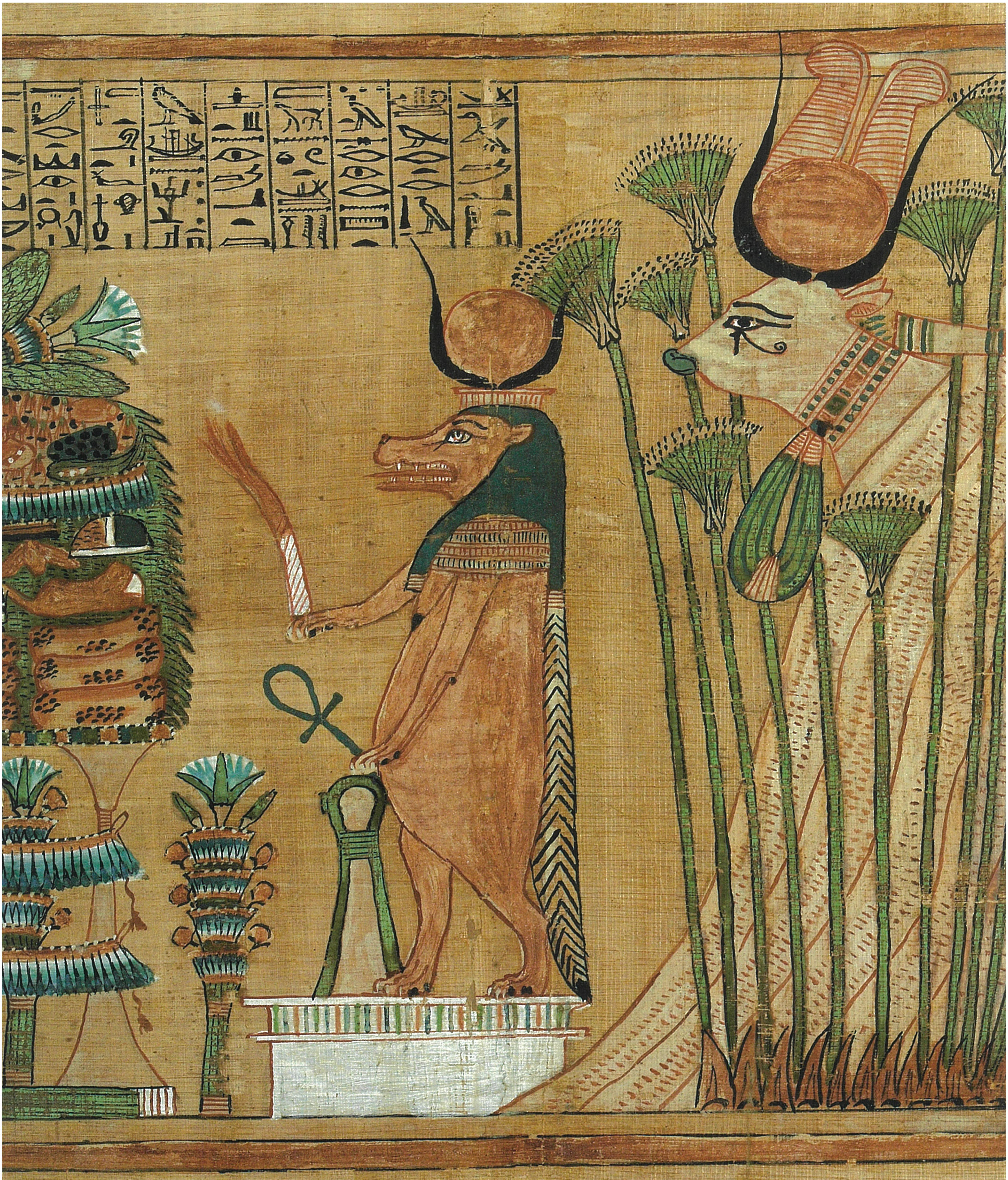
Divine Favor

To win favor with their animal-associated divinities, ancient Egyptians would often turn to their mortal counterparts. Mummified birds and beasts have been found by the thousands at archaeological sites across Egypt. Many were considered votive objects and offered by pilgrims at local temples during religious festivals.

In 2018 archaeologists found dozens of cat mummies and 100 statues of Bastet in a 4,500-year-old tomb in Saqqara. Mummified ibises, the bird associated with Thoth, god of wisdom and writing, were found by the scores at Abydos, the burial ground of Egypt's earliest rulers. Archaeologists are still finding large numbers of these mummified birds in sites across Egypt.

By the end of the Ptolemaic period in the first century B.C., animal cults' popularity began to fall out of favor. During Roman rule and the expansion of Christianity into Egypt, the old gods were abandoned. Today new discoveries and the iconic artifacts of ancient Egypt are a reminder of a time that lasted three millennia, in which an animal's power, grace, and strength were worshipped. ■

EGYPTOLOGIST **ELISA CASTEL** HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ON EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY AND WRITING SYSTEMS.



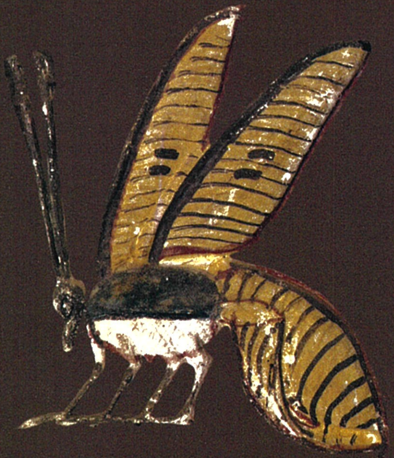
ANIMAL MAGIC

In this scene from the Book of the Dead, from a 13th-century B.C. edition named the Ani Papyrus, the goddess Opet is represented by the form of a hippopotamus before an altar of offerings. Behind her, a cow wearing the typical menat necklace associated with the goddess Hathor emerges from a bed of papyri. Both carry the solar disk between their two horns. British Museum, London

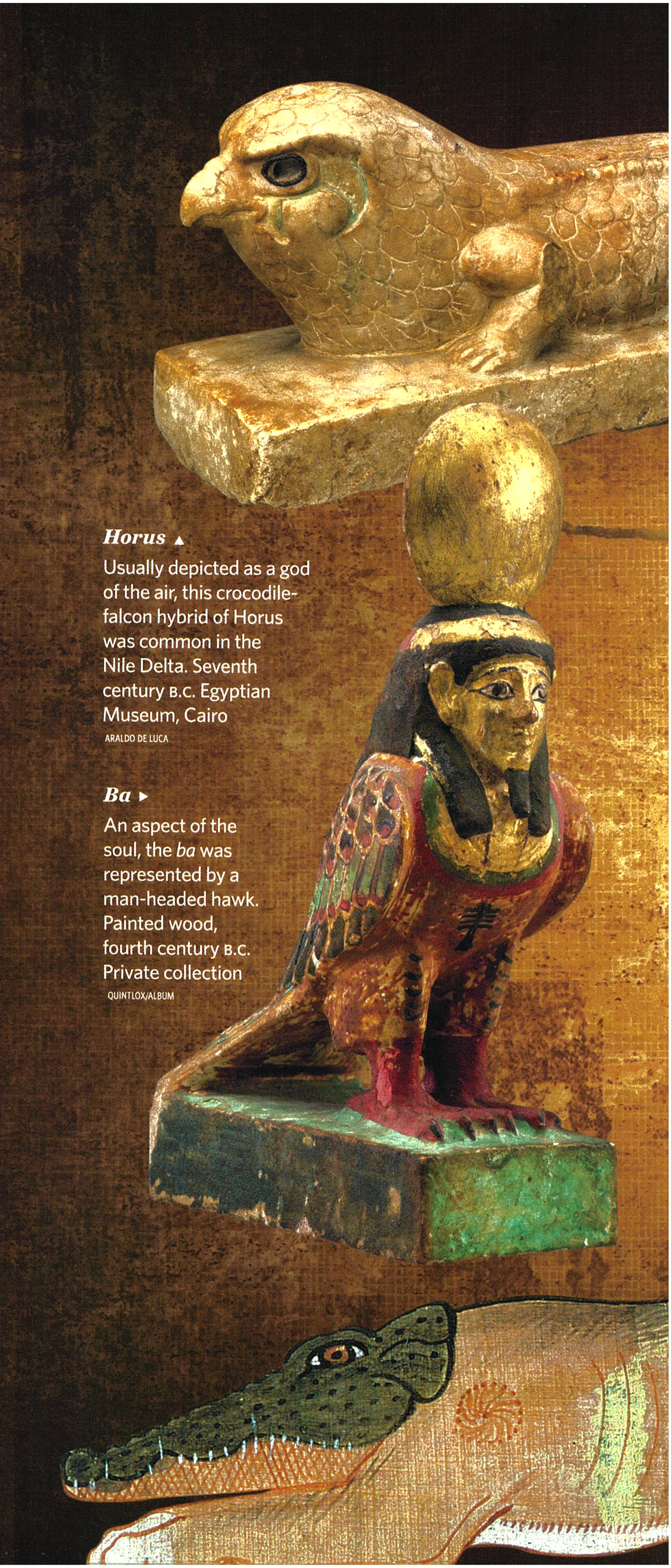
BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

ALL CREATURES, GREAT AND SMALL

The deities of the Egyptian pantheon reflected the rich fauna of the Nile Valley. They ranged from the bee to the baboon, the scorpion to the snake, the cat to the crocodile.



TOP: A WINGED CLOISONNÉ SCARAB FROM TUTANKHAMUN'S TOMB. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO AKG/ALBUM
BOTTOM: A FRESCO OF A BEE, ASSOCIATED WITH THE TITLES OF THE PHARAOH, IN THE 13TH-CENTURY B.C. TOMB OF SETI I SCALA, FLORENCE



***Horus* ▲**

Usually depicted as a god of the air, this crocodile-falcon hybrid of Horus was common in the Nile Delta. Seventh century B.C. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

ARALDO DE LUCA

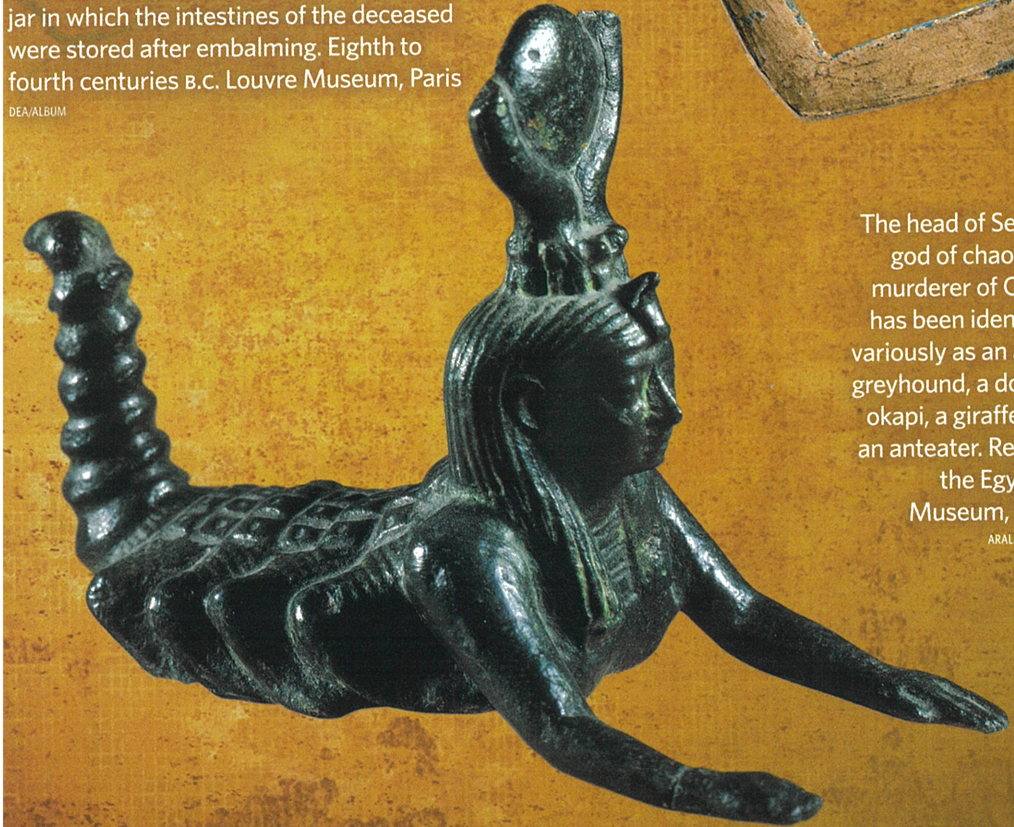
***Ba* ▸**

An aspect of the soul, the *ba* was represented by a man-headed hawk. Painted wood, fourth century B.C. Private collection

QUINTLOX/ALBUM

MIX AND MATCH

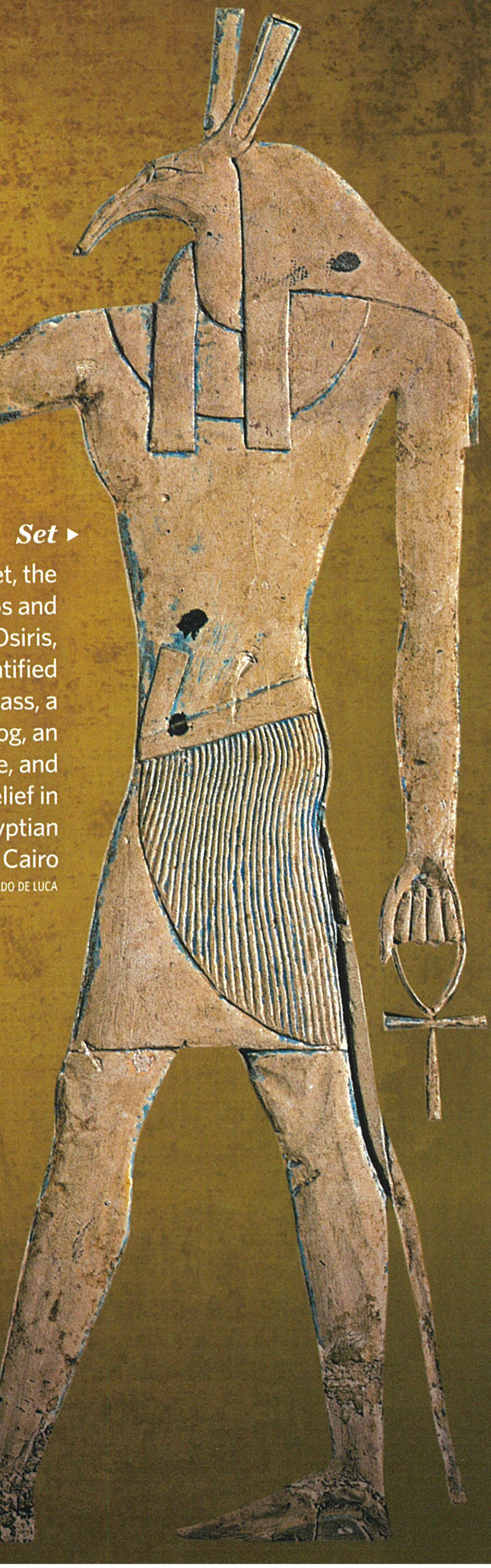
THE EGYPTIAN PANTHEON comprised numerous fantastical hybrids. Most deities had an animal head on a human body, especially when depicted for display in a temple. Depictions of humans—such as the *ba,* a manifestation of the soul—take the form of a human head on an animal body. Monsters such as Ammit could be composed of up to four animals.



Selket ▼

This goddess with a scorpion's body was thought to cure respiratory problems and poisonous bites and to protect the canopic jar in which the intestines of the deceased were stored after embalming. Eighth to fourth centuries B.C. Louvre Museum, Paris

DEA/ALBUM



Set ▸

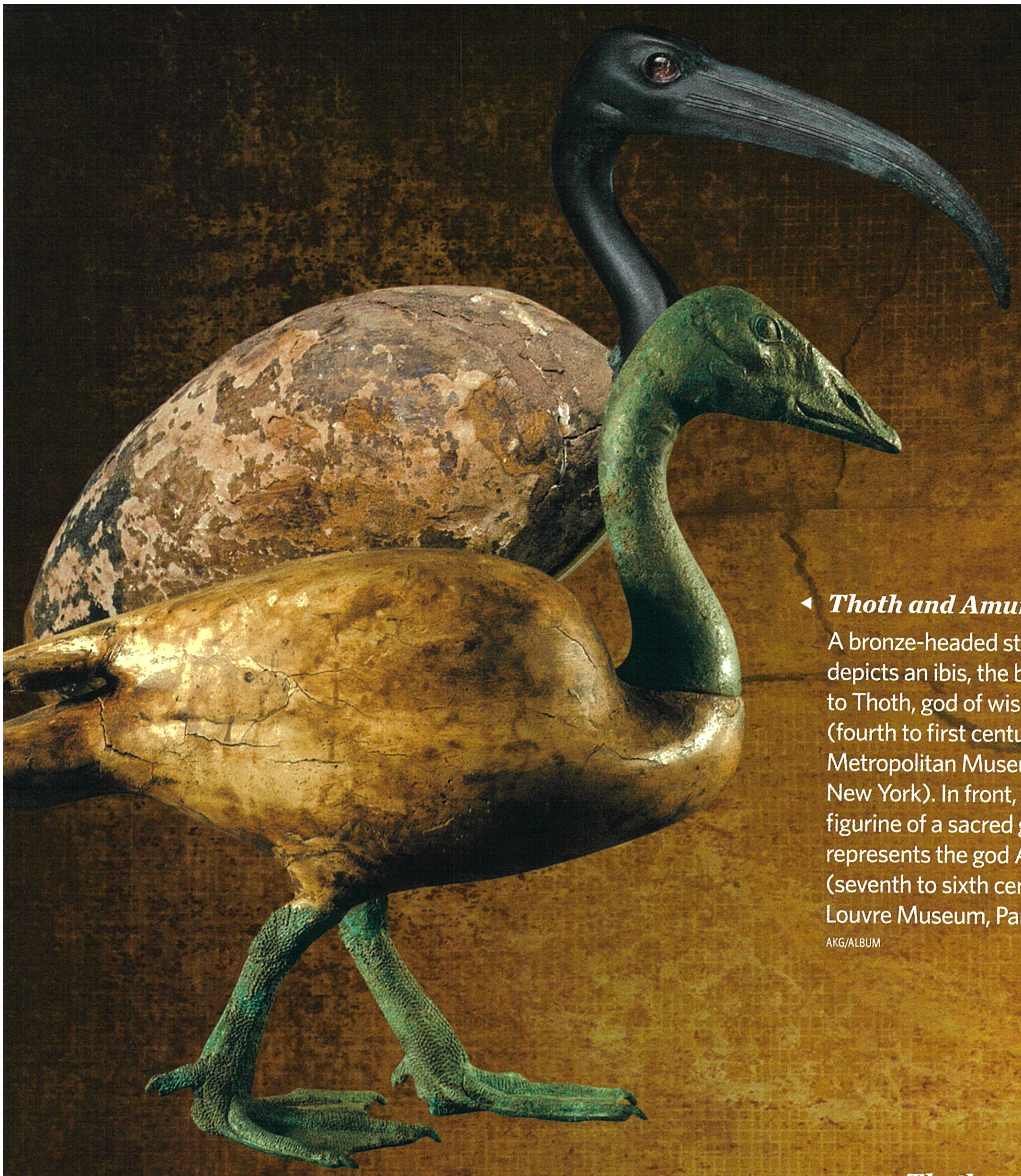
The head of Set, the god of chaos and murderer of Osiris, has been identified variously as an ass, a greyhound, a dog, an okapi, a giraffe, and an anteater. Relief in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo

ARALDO DE LUCA

◂ ***Ammit, the Devourer***

Represented with a crocodile's head, lion's feet, leopard's body, and hippopotamus's hindquarters, this goddess swallowed the hearts of deceased sinners, obliterating them forever. From a papyrus of the Book of the Dead by the 18th-dynasty scribe Nebqed, ca 1390-1350 B.C. Louvre Museum, Paris

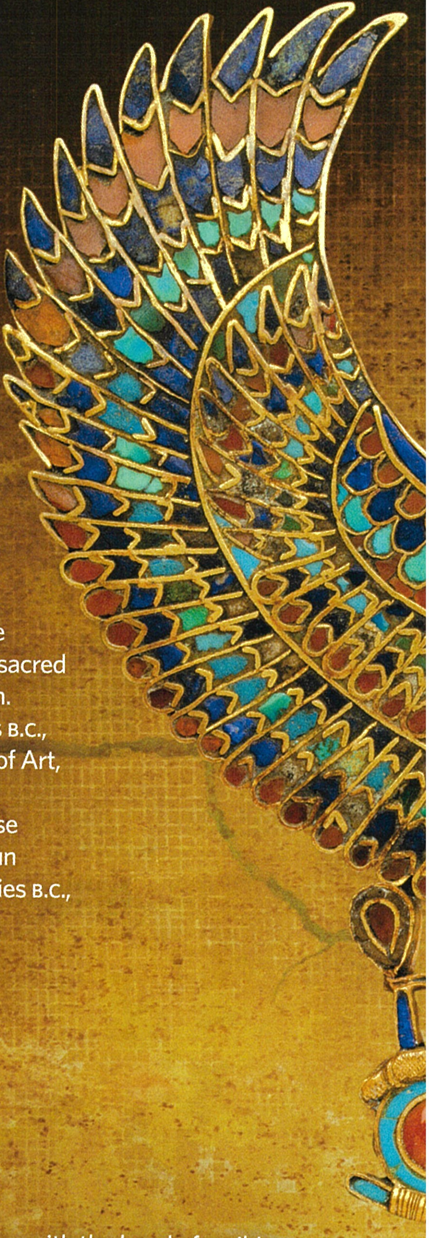
UIG/ALBUM

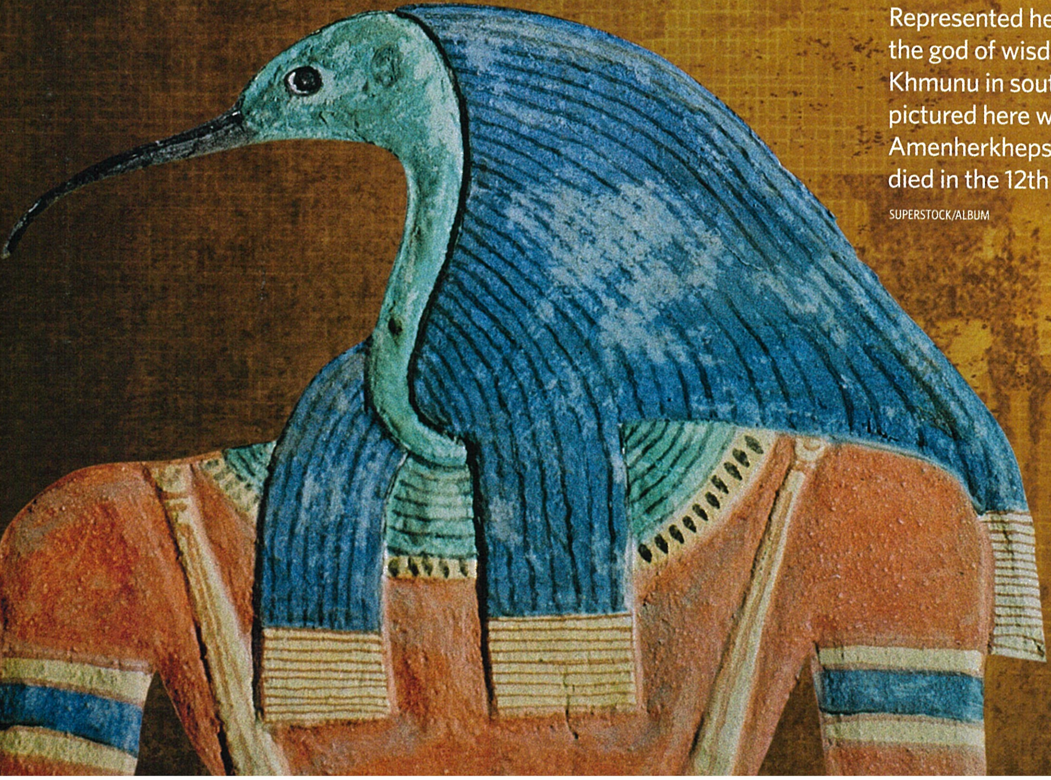


◂ ***Thoth and Amun***

A bronze-headed statue depicts an ibis, the bird sacred to Thoth, god of wisdom. (fourth to first centuries B.C., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). In front, the figurine of a sacred goose represents the god Amun (seventh to sixth centuries B.C., Louvre Museum, Paris).

AKG/ALBUM





◂ ***Thoth***

Represented here with the head of an ibis, the god of wisdom originated in the city of Khmunu in southern Egypt. The relief pictured here was produced for the tomb of Amenherkhepshef, son of Ramses III, who died in the 12th century B.C.

SUPERSTOCK/ALBUM

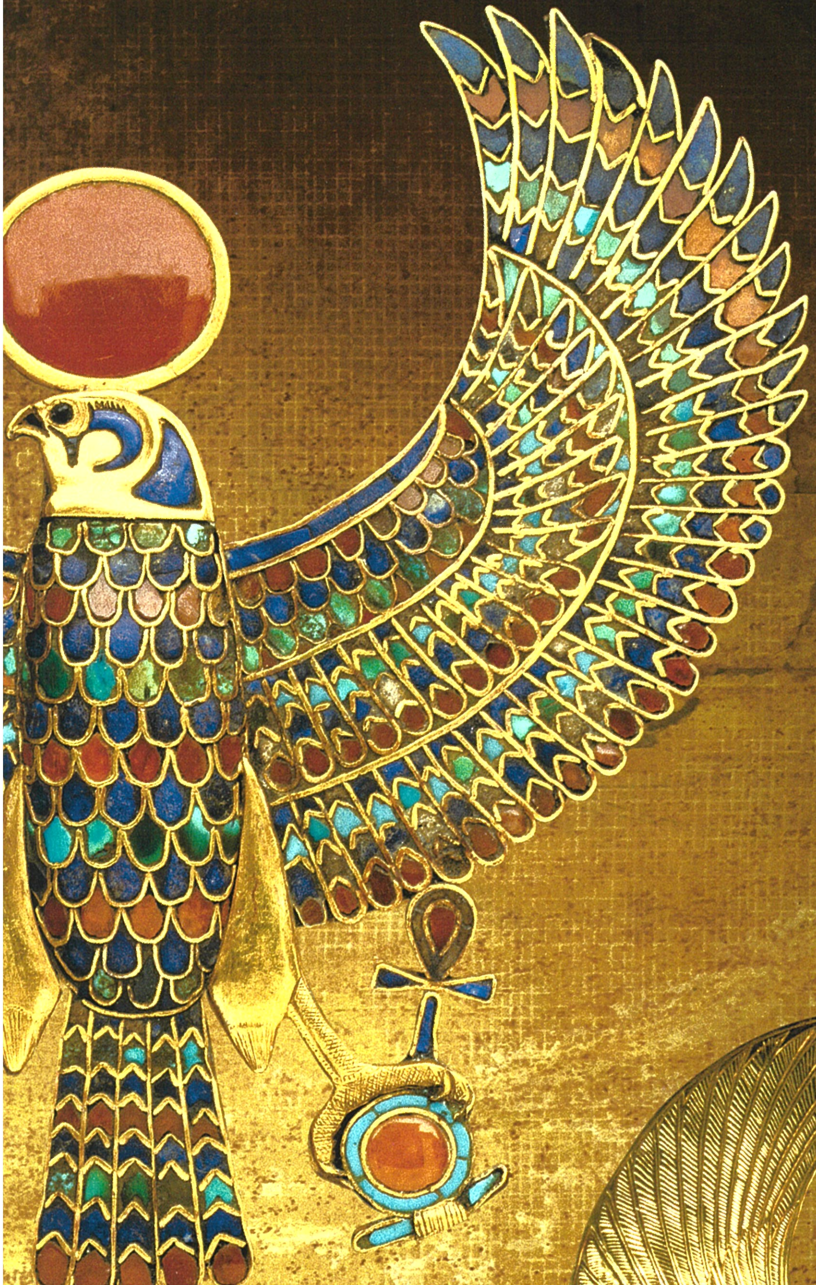
Qebehsenuef ▸

The four canopic jars containing the viscera of the deceased often took the form of the four sons of Horus. This one, from the tenth to eighth centuries B.C., has the form of Qebehsenuef. Falcon-headed like his father, his job was to protect the intestines. Louvre Museum, Paris

DEA/ALBUM

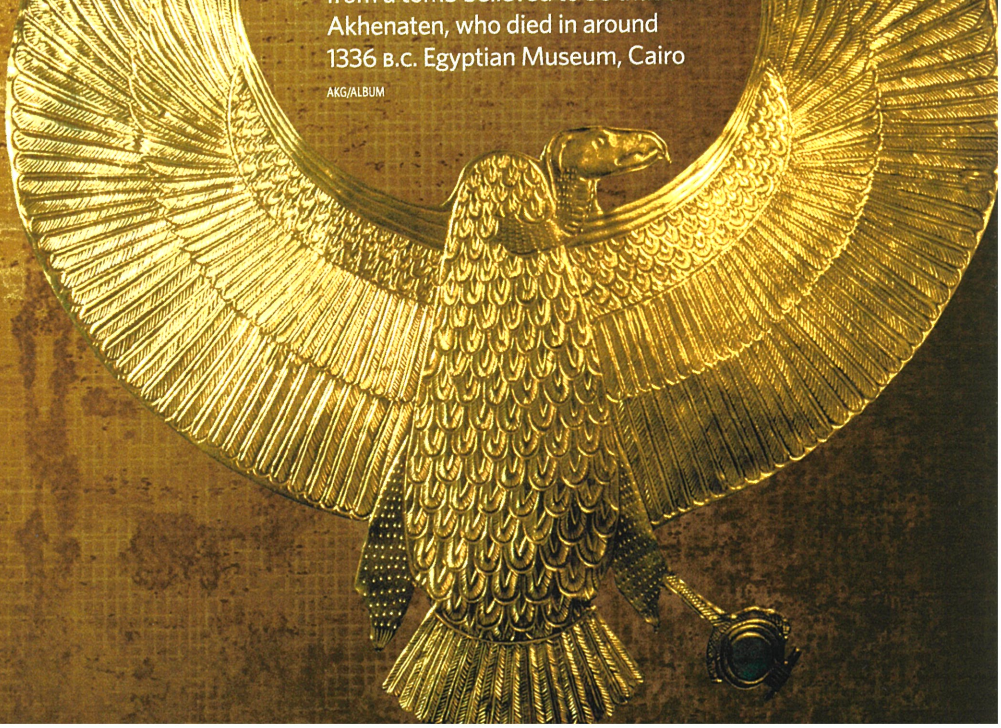
WINGS AND FEATHERS

BIRDS had a privileged position in the Egyptian pantheon. At the top of the food chain, the falcon was especially prominent. Embodying the very ancient god Horus, it came to stand as the holy bond between the pharaoh and the realm of the gods. A carrion-eater, such as the vulture, was a protector, and the ibis was associated with knowledge.



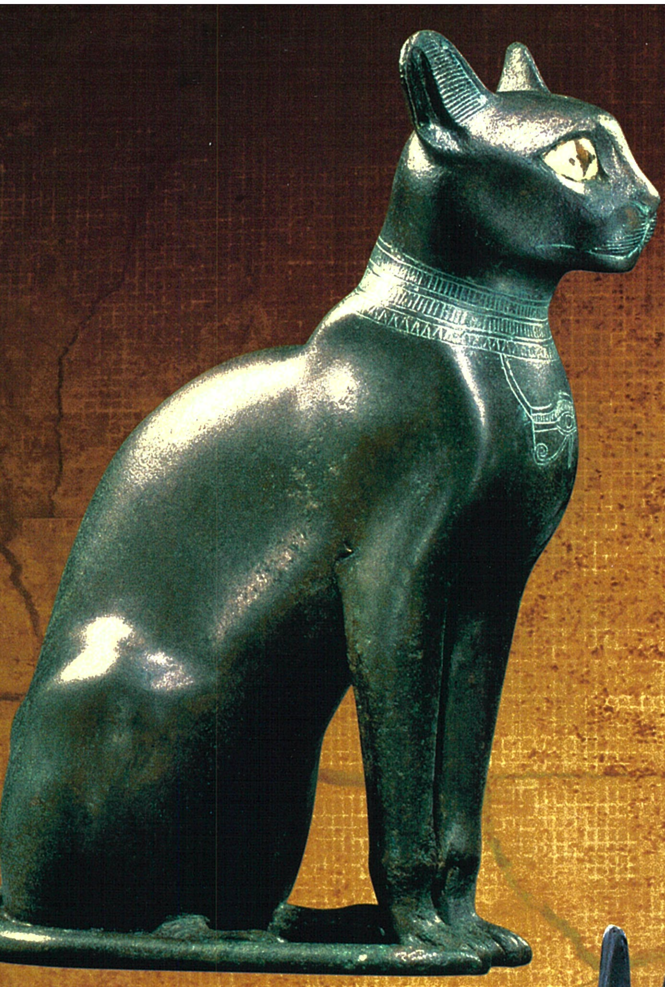
◂ ***Horus***
The falcon embodied the warrior and solar gods, among the most important of which was Horus. This magnificent breastplate, made using the cloisonné technique of inlaid glass, was found in the tomb of the teenage king Tutankhamun, who died around 1325 B.C. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

ARALDO DE LUCA



Nekhbet ▾
The vulture goddess was considered the royal protector of Upper Egypt. This breastplate is from a tomb believed to be that of Akhenaten, who died in around 1336 B.C. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

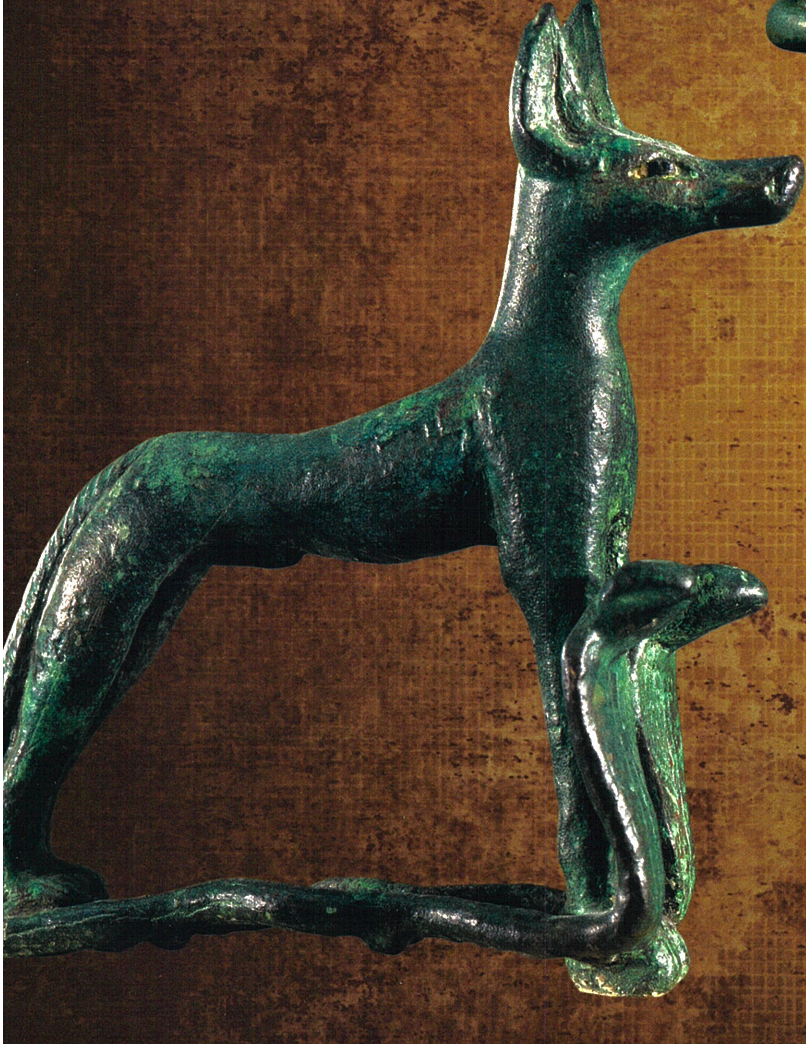
AKG/ALBUM



Bastet ▸

Originally a lioness goddess, Bastet was later depicted as a milder domestic cat. Bronze figurines of Bastet would be laid as votive offerings. This bronze statue is from the eighth to fourth centuries B.C. Egyptian Museum, Berlin

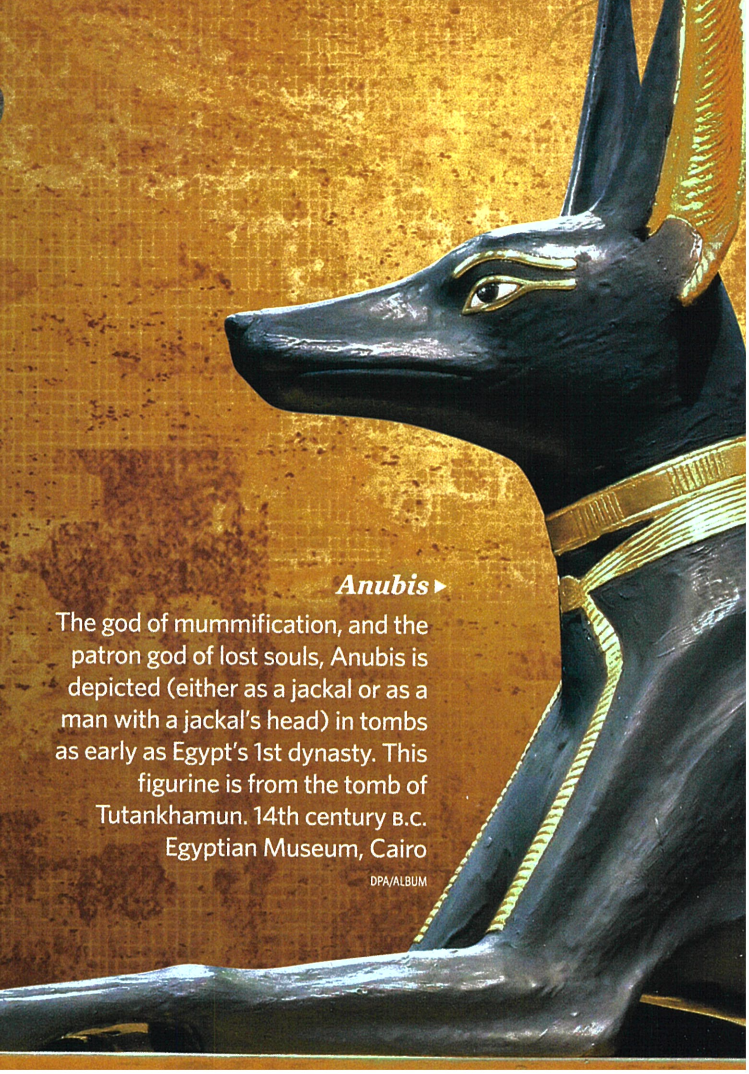
ORONOZ/ALBUM



Wepwawet ▾

The name of this canine god, flanked here by two cobras, means "opener of the way." His main role was to guide souls through the afterlife. Some Egyptologists think Anubis evolved from him; if so, both continued to have separate roles, and they are often depicted facing one another. Louvre Museum, Paris

SCALA, FLORENCE



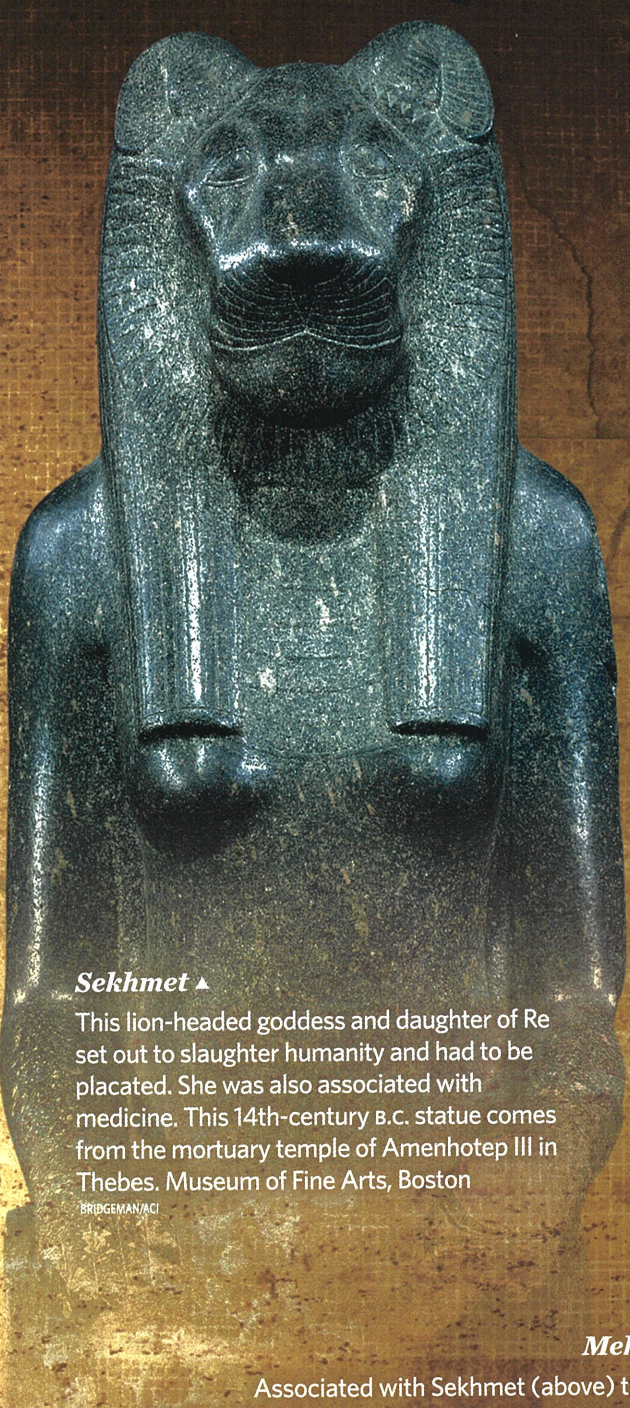
Anubis ▸

The god of mummification, and the patron god of lost souls, Anubis is depicted (either as a jackal or as a man with a jackal's head) in tombs as early as Egypt's 1st dynasty. This figurine is from the tomb of Tutankhamun. 14th century B.C. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

DPA/ALBUM

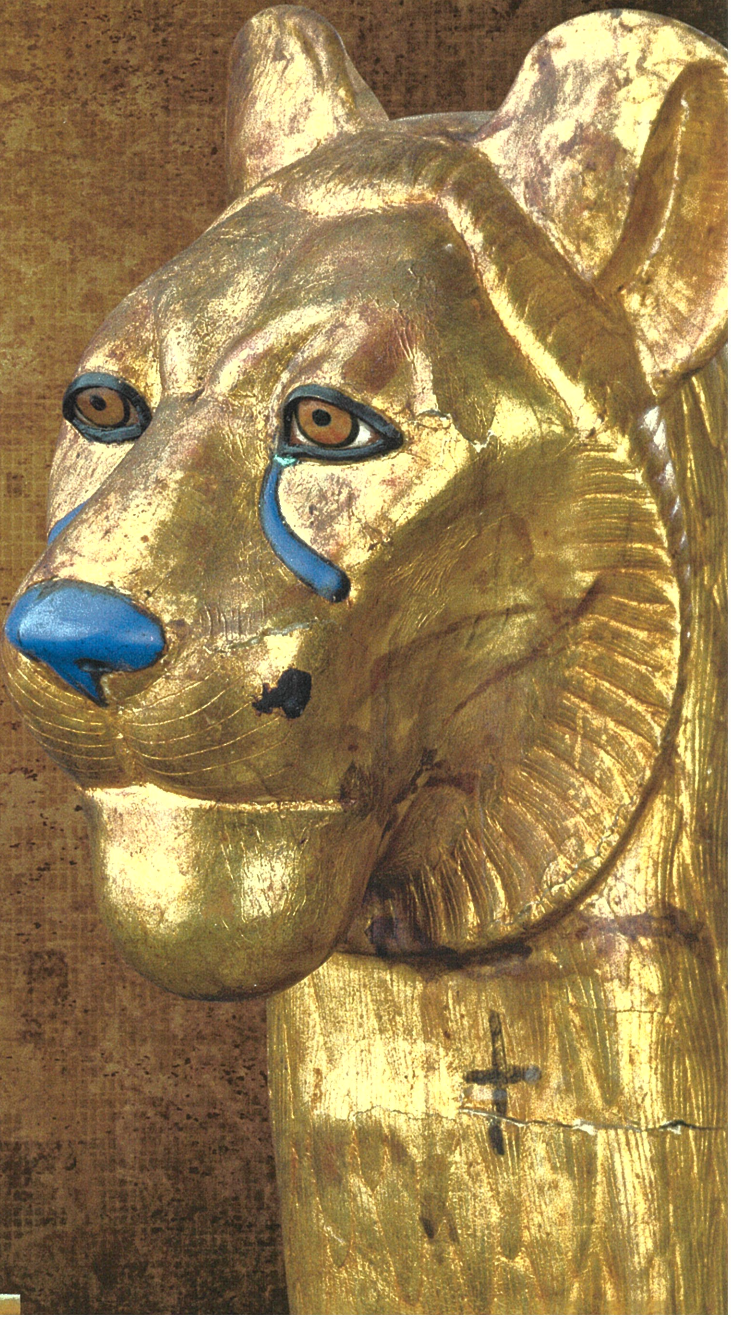
CATS AND DOGS

THERE IS A WEALTH of feline representation in Egyptian religious art. Cats in the form of lions and leopards are associated with the destructive power of the pharaoh in war. Smaller cats could represent gentleness, but they had their fierce side too: Re, the solar deity, can take the form of a cat, and slash the terrifying serpent of chaos, Apophis. Canine gods—jackals and dogs—were regarded as protectors of the dead, who led the deceased into the Hereafter.



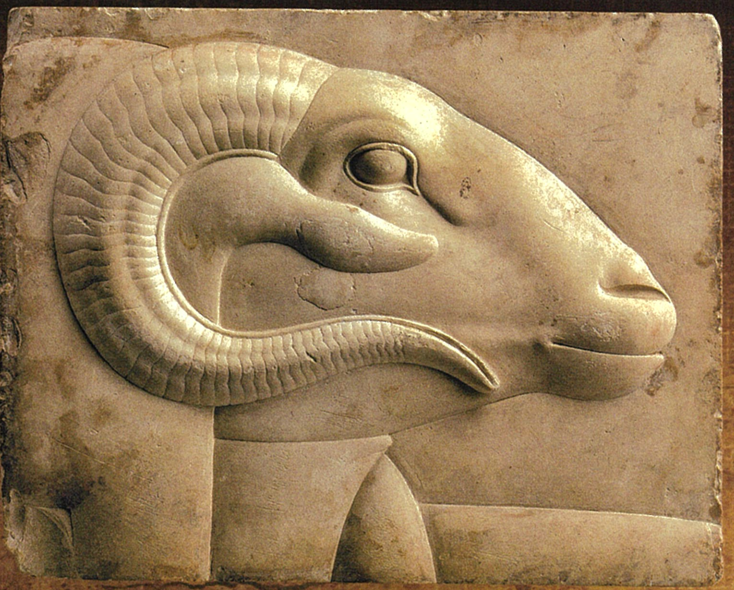
Sekhmet ▲
This lion-headed goddess and daughter of Re set out to slaughter humanity and had to be placated. She was also associated with medicine. This 14th-century B.C. statue comes from the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III in Thebes. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



Mehit ▶
Associated with Sekhmet (above) this ferocious lioness-headed deity brought pharaohs fortune in war. It is believed that this gilded wooden lioness, forming the structure of the 14th-century B.C. bed in Tutankhamun's tomb, is that of Mehit. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

ARALDO DE LUCA



Amun ▸

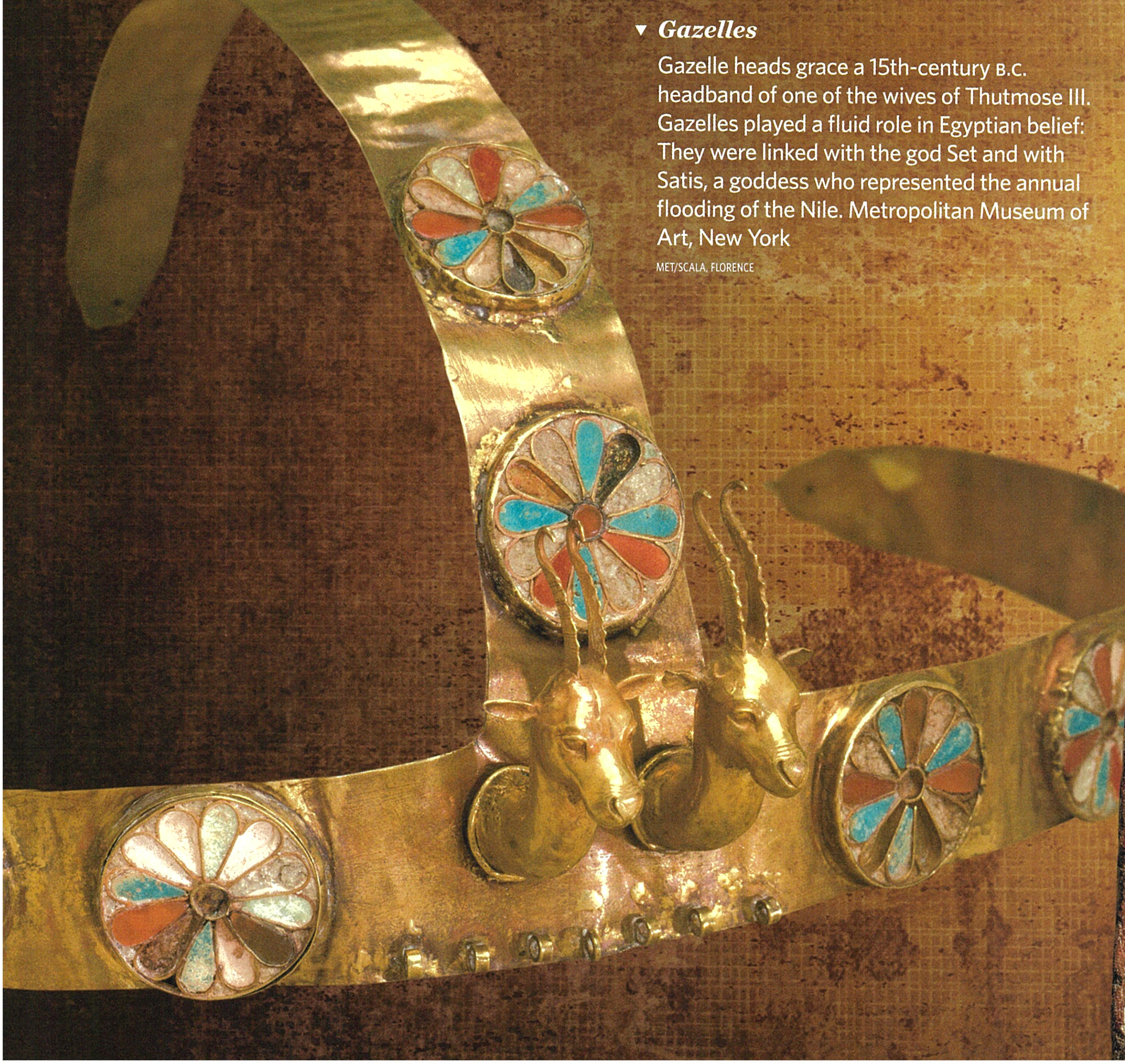
This relief plaque depicts a ram-headed god, probably Amun, the Egyptian state deity in the New Kingdom. It was produced around the fifth century B.C. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

QUINTLOX/ALBUM

▾ Gazelles

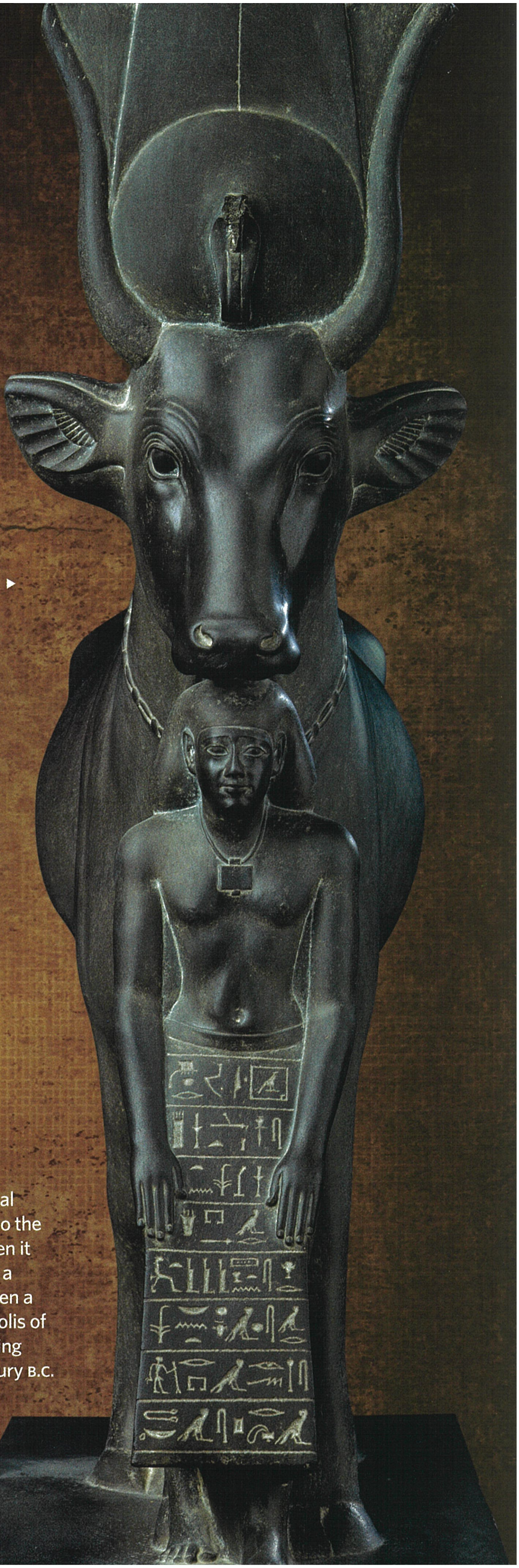
Gazelle heads grace a 15th-century B.C. headband of one of the wives of Thutmose III. Gazelles played a fluid role in Egyptian belief: They were linked with the god Set and with Satis, a goddess who represented the annual flooding of the Nile. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

MET/SCALA, FLORENCE



HORNS AND HOOVES

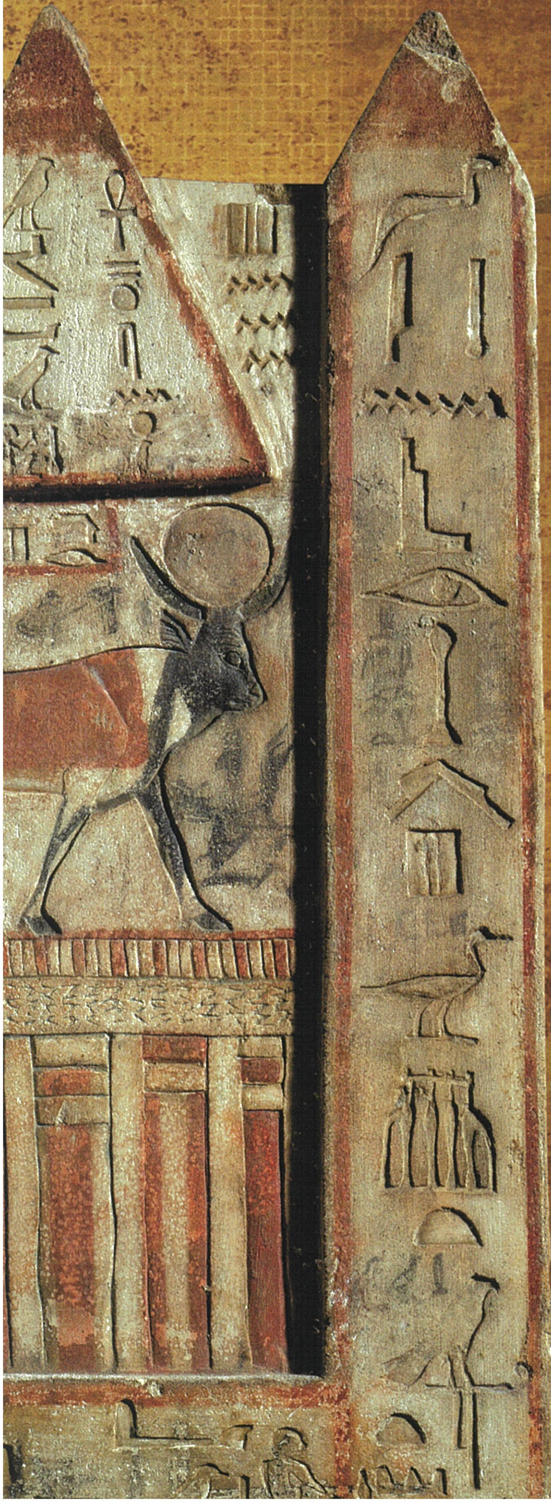
HORNED ANIMALS abounded in the Egyptian pantheon. The bull, with its associations of fertility and virility, was linked to kingship starting in the Predynastic Period. Cows, considered to be nourishing deities, were associated with motherhood, and especially Hathor, one of the most important early goddesses. The ram, also representing fertility, was associated with Amun.



Hathor ▸

Cows were regarded as divine in Egypt from the Predynastic Period. Hathor was the principal bovine goddess, the deity of the sky, love, fertility, women, and childbirth. In this schist statue from the seventh or sixth centuries B.C., the goddess protects the chief scribe Psamtik. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

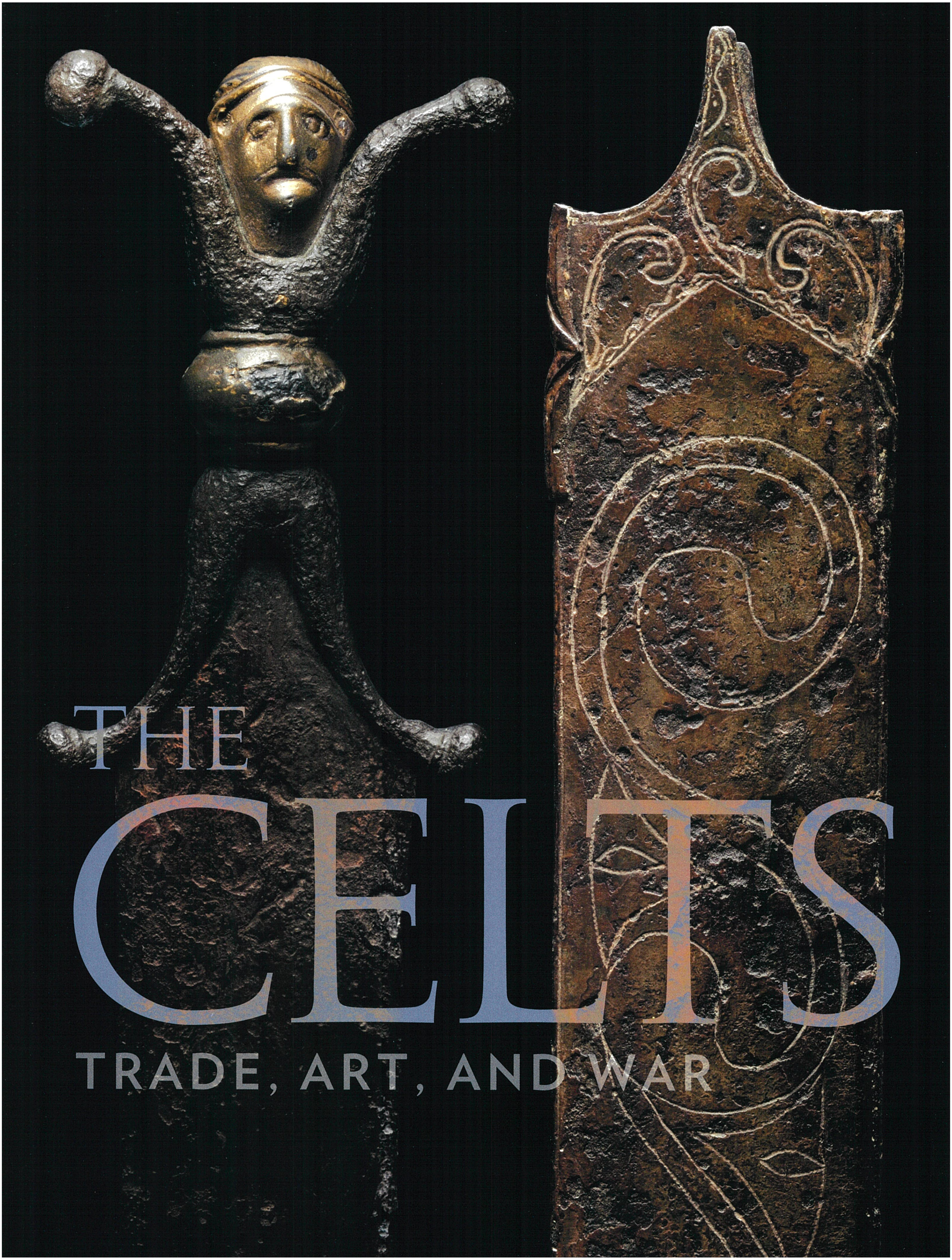
ARALDO DE LUCA



◂ ***The Apis bull***

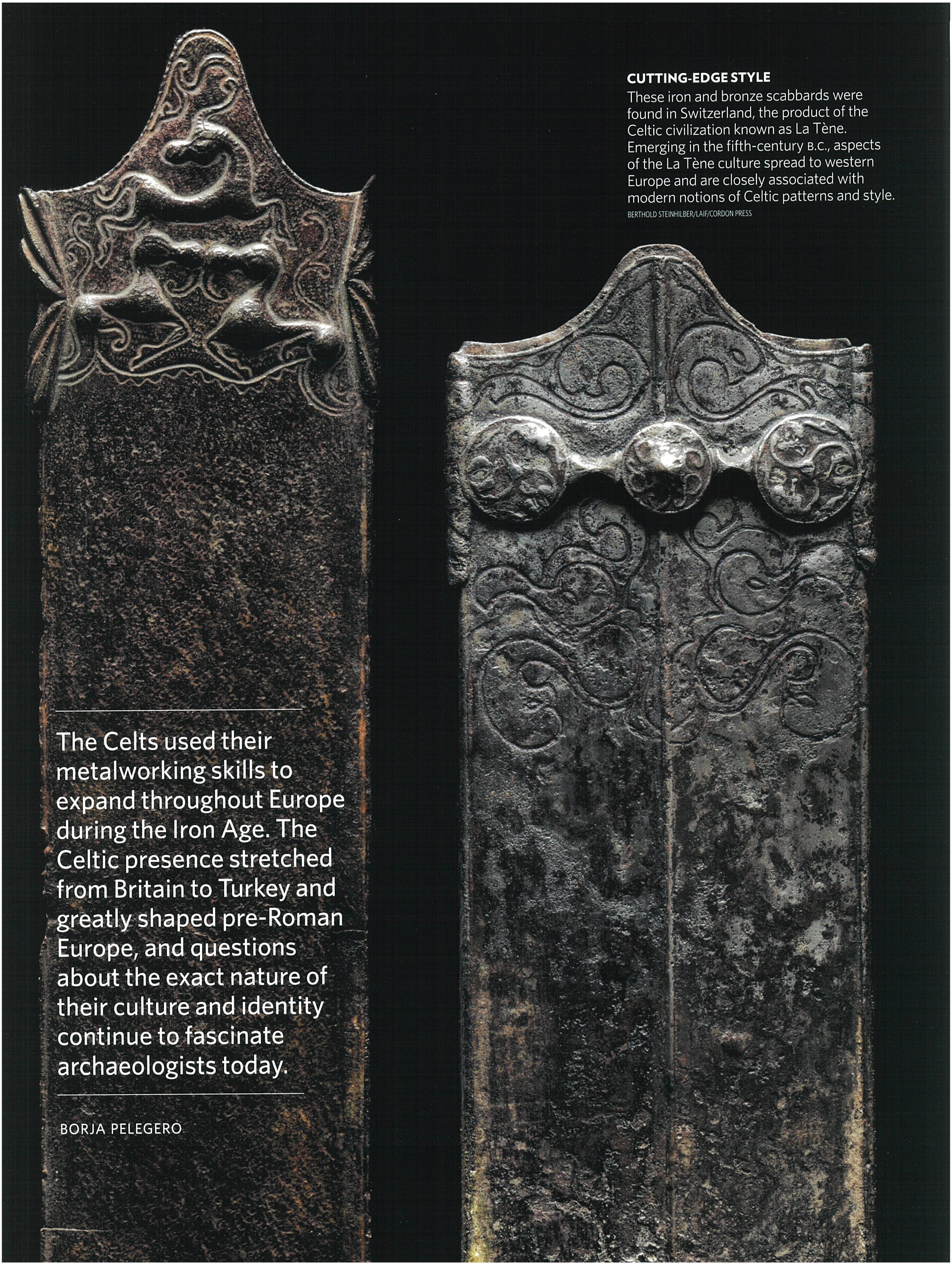
Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis, was an individual beast selected according to the markings on its body. When it died, it would be placed in a large sarcophagus and given a lavish burial at the necropolis of Saqqara. This stela depicting Apis is from the 10th century B.C. Louvre Museum, Paris

DEA/ALBUM



THE CELTS

TRADE, ART, AND WAR

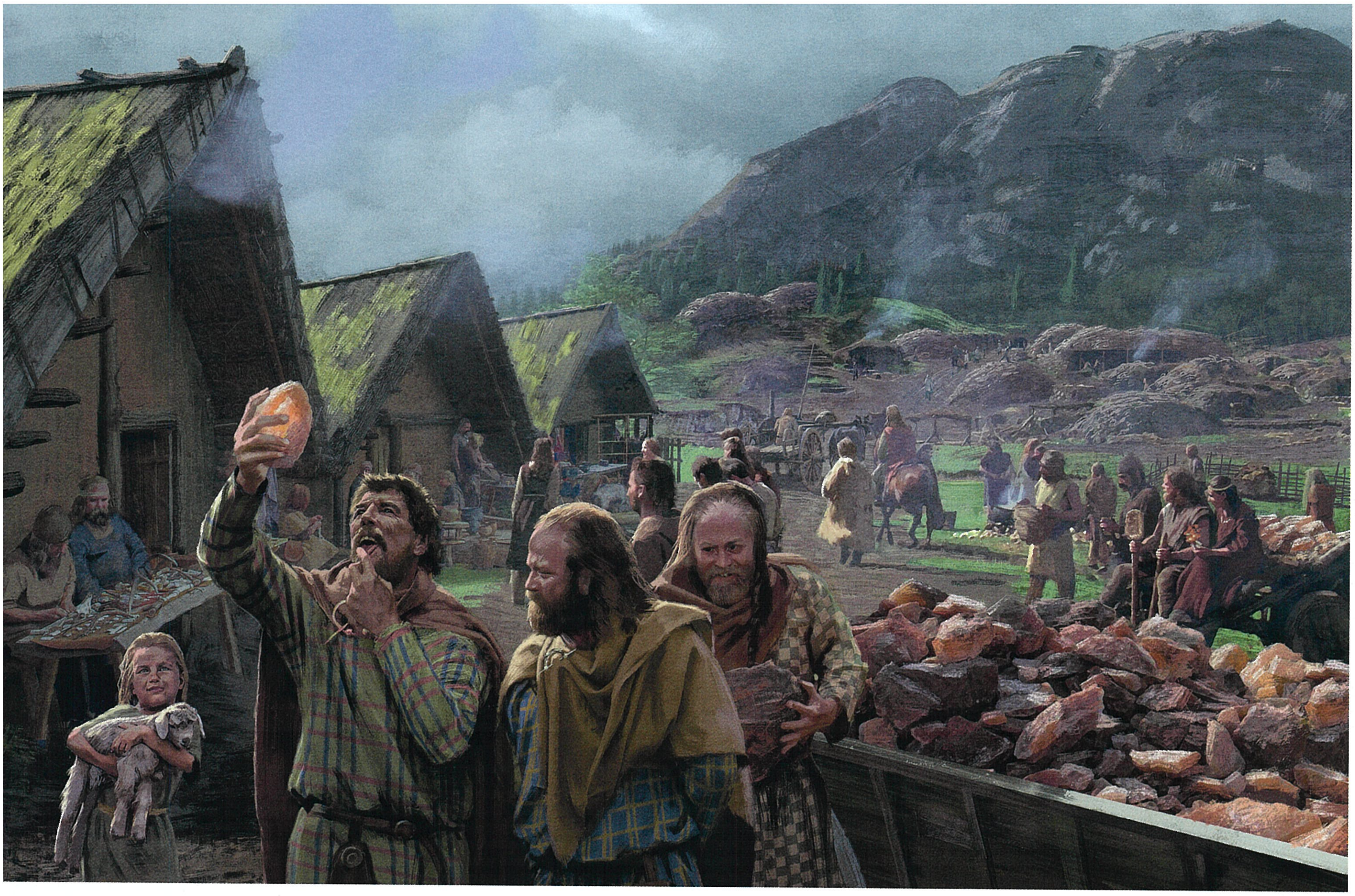


CUTTING-EDGE STYLE
These iron and bronze scabbards were found in Switzerland, the product of the Celtic civilization known as La Tène. Emerging in the fifth-century B.C., aspects of the La Tène culture spread to western Europe and are closely associated with modern notions of Celtic patterns and style.

BERTHOLD STEINHILBER/LAIF/CORDON PRESS

The Celts used their metalworking skills to expand throughout Europe during the Iron Age. The Celtic presence stretched from Britain to Turkey and greatly shaped pre-Roman Europe, and questions about the exact nature of their culture and identity continue to fascinate archaeologists today.

BORJA PELEGERO



BIG BUSINESS

Mining and selling salt (above) was central to the flowering of Celtic culture in Hallstatt (located in modern Austria) during the Iron Age.

ILLUSTRATION: SAMSON GOETZE

Near the mouth of the Rhône River, 2,600 years ago, Greek traders founded a colony called Massilia, today the site of the French city of Marseille. Venturing inland along the Rhône Valley, those traders encountered a people who spoke a tongue the Greeks did not recognize. Ruled by wealthy chieftains and hungry for luxury goods, they seemed fierce and warlike. A century later, Greek geographer Hecataeus of Miletus gave them a name—Keltoi, translated into Latin by the Romans as Celtae.

Today, the word "Celtic" represents many things: a style of modern jewelry; a typeface; and an epithet of national pride among people of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish descent. In historical terms, however, "Celtic" is harder to define, in part because the Celts lived across such a wide area, inhabiting lands from Ireland to Turkey.

A few historians argue that the term "Celt" is almost historically meaningless. Many historians, however, concur with Barry Cunliffe, emeritus professor of European archaeology at Oxford, who believes that the Celts can be understood as a culture with shared belief systems and a common language, versions of which are still spoken in western Europe, especially in Ireland and Scotland. In this spirit, historians now regard Celtic culture not in terms of a unified people, but as a bundle of shared linguistic and cultural traits distributed among various Iron Age peoples who profoundly shaped pre-Roman Europe.

BRONZE CUIRASS HALLSTATT CULTURE, CA 600 B.C., SLOVENIA

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

The Celtic Jigsaw

The Celts of central Europe of this period are protohistoric: Aside from a few inscriptions, they did not fully develop a writing system, but modern historians have relied on accounts of them left by their neighbors, notably the Greeks and Romans.

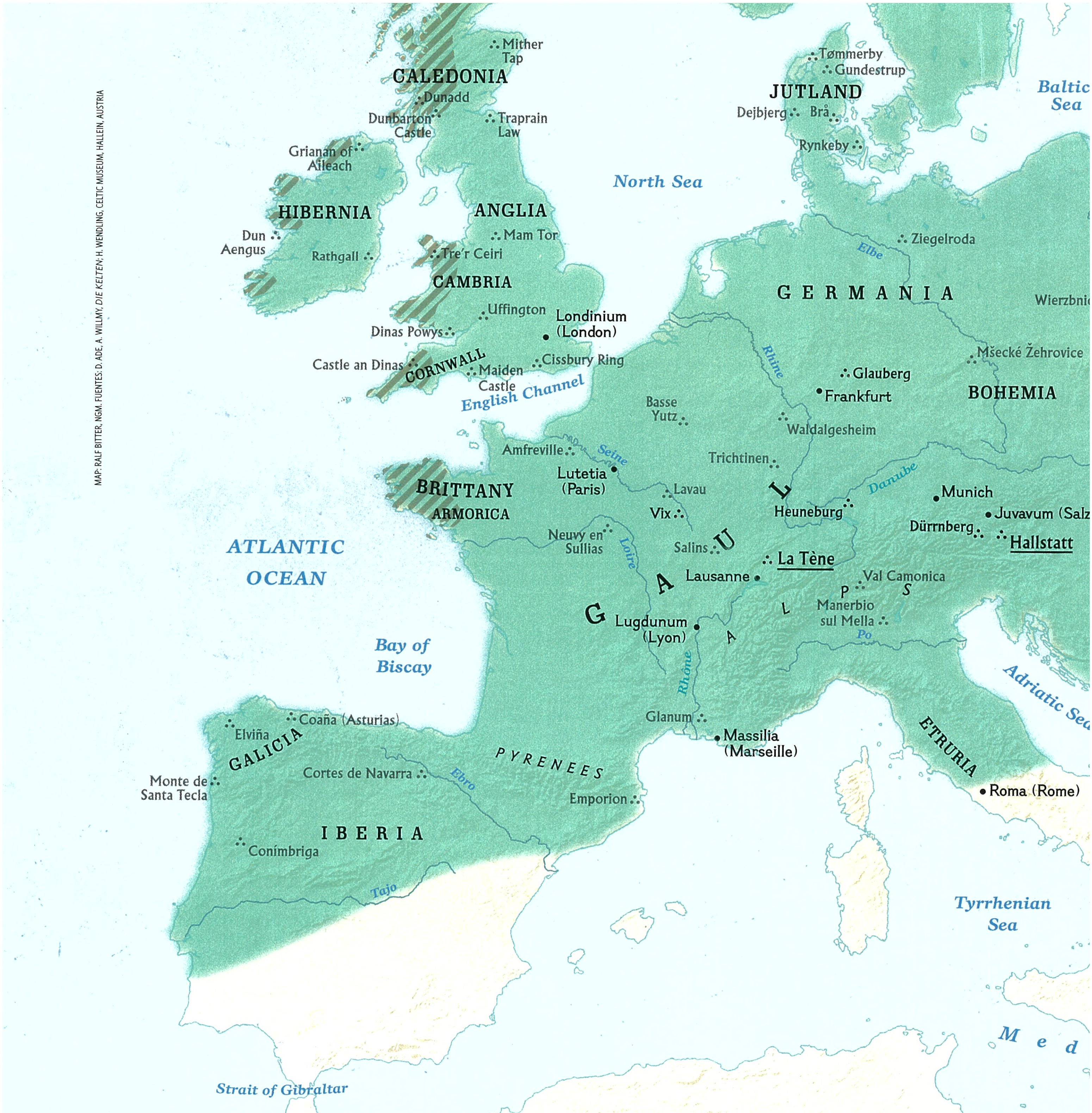
Greek authors were aware of the scope of the Celtic world. Trade up and down the Rhône Valley informed them of the presence of Celts in central Europe. In the fourth century B.C., Pytheas, a geographer from Massilia, chronicled a sea voyage up the Atlantic coast of Europe and described how the Celtic people could be found in Armorica (Brittany, in northwestern France).

At first the Celts were noted for their trading habits, and later for their warlike nature. Roman writers, such as Livy, drew on the works of

THE RHÔNE CONNECTION

Originating from a glacier near Switzerland's Furka Pass, the Rhône River runs to the Mediterranean. It was the major artery that connected the central European Celts to the classical world.

IMAGEBROKER/ALAMY

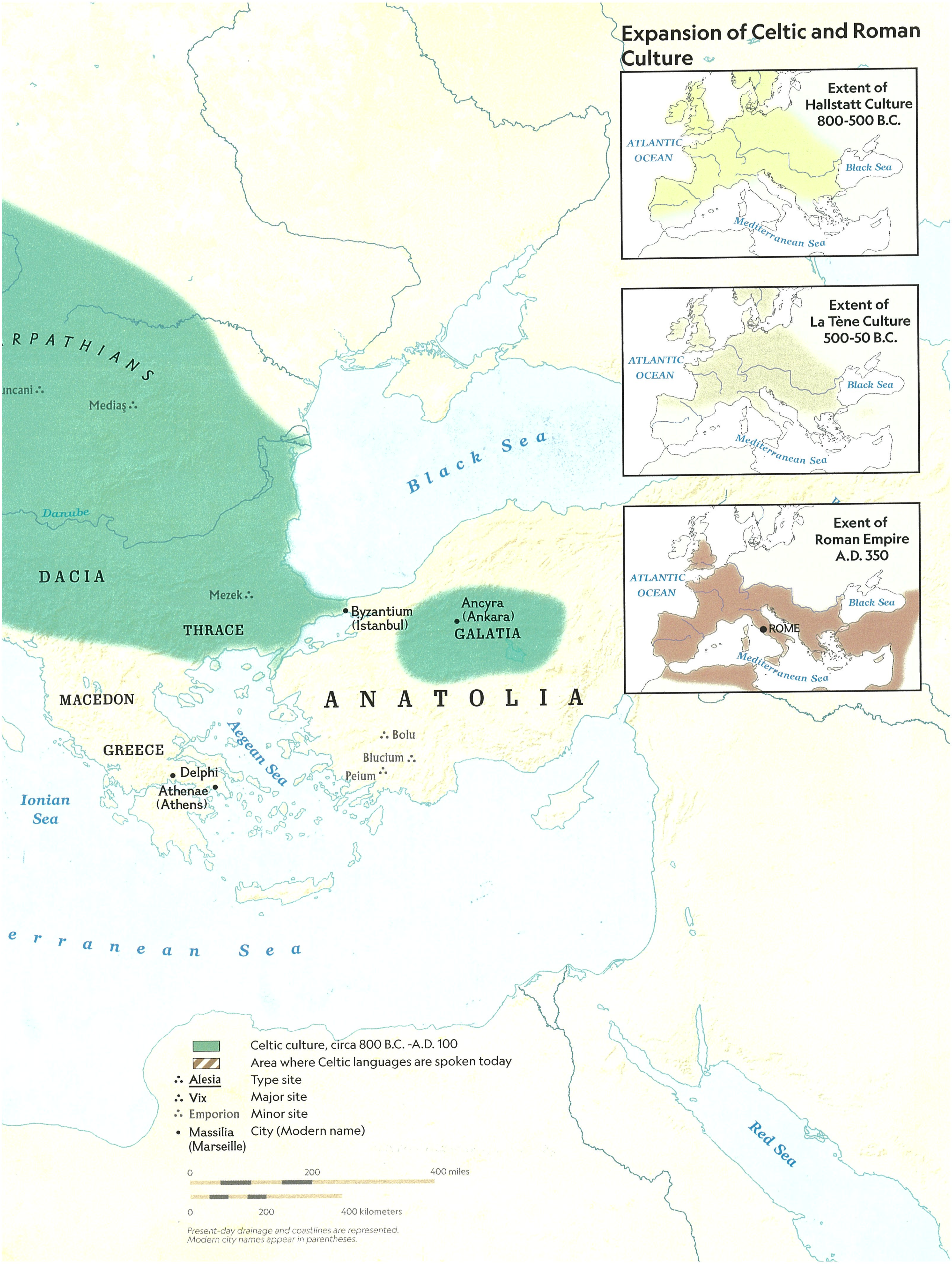

Mither Tap
CALEDONIA
Dunadd
Dunbarton Castle
Traprain Law
Grianan of Aileach
HIBERNIA
Dun Aengus
Rathgall
ANGLIA
Mam Tor
Tre'r Ceiri
CAMBRIA
Uffington
Londinium (London)
Dinas Powys
Castle an Dinas
CORNWALL
Maiden Castle
Cissbury Ring
English Channel
Tømmerby
Gundestrup
JUTLAND
Dejbjerg
Brå
Rynkeby
Baltic Sea
North Sea
Elbe
Ziegelroda
GERMANIA
Wierzbni
Rhine
Mšecké Žehrovice
Glauberg
Frankfurt
BOHEMIA
Basse Yutz
Waldalgesheim
Amfreville
Seine
Lutetia (Paris)
Trichtinen
BRITTANY
ARMORICA
Lavau
Vix
Danube
Heuneburg
Munich
Juvavum (Salz
Dürrnberg
Hallstatt
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Neuvy en Sullias
Loire
Salins
La Tène
Lausanne
GAUL
Val Camonica
ALPS
Manerbio sul Mella
Po
Lugdunum (Lyon)
Bay of Biscay
Rhône
Adriatic Sea
Glanum
Massilia (Marseille)
ETRURIA
Roma (Rome)
Elviña
Coaña (Asturias)
GALICIA
PYRENEES
Monte de Santa Tecla
Cortes de Navarra
Ebro
Emporion
IBERIA
Conímbriga
Tajo
Tyrrhenian Sea
Med
Strait of Gibraltar

MAP: RALF BITTER, NGM. FUENTES: D. ADE, A. WILLMY, *DIE KELTEN*; H. WENDLING, CELTIC MUSEUM, HALLEIN, AUSTRIA

THE SPREAD OF CELTIC CULTURE

THE CELTIC languages belong to the Indo-European family of languages, which derive from a common tongue introduced to Europe by migrating farmers about 5,000 years ago. Atlantic-facing areas of Iberia, France, Britain, and Ireland were home to very ancient, Celtic-speaking communities. In central Europe, the Celtic-speaking Hallstatt culture started to form in the Late Bronze Age, in 1200 B.C. From 800 B.C., trade in iron goods, salt, and fur with Mediterranean traders fueled an economic boom, expressed in the sumptuous burial mounds of the Hallstatt princes. The Hallstatt civilization rapidly declined from around 500 B.C., to be replaced by the more militaristic La Tène culture, whose artwork was marked by a distinctive geometric style. Soon after, migrating Celtic bands settled northern Italy, and by the third century B.C., the Celts had reached the Balkans and Galatia in Anatolia (Turkey). Celtic power and identity was eroded by the rise of Rome, but its linguistic legacy lives on in the six surviving Celtic languages of the west: Scottish, Irish, and Manx Gaelic; Cornish; Welsh; and Breton.

Expansion of Celtic and Roman Culture

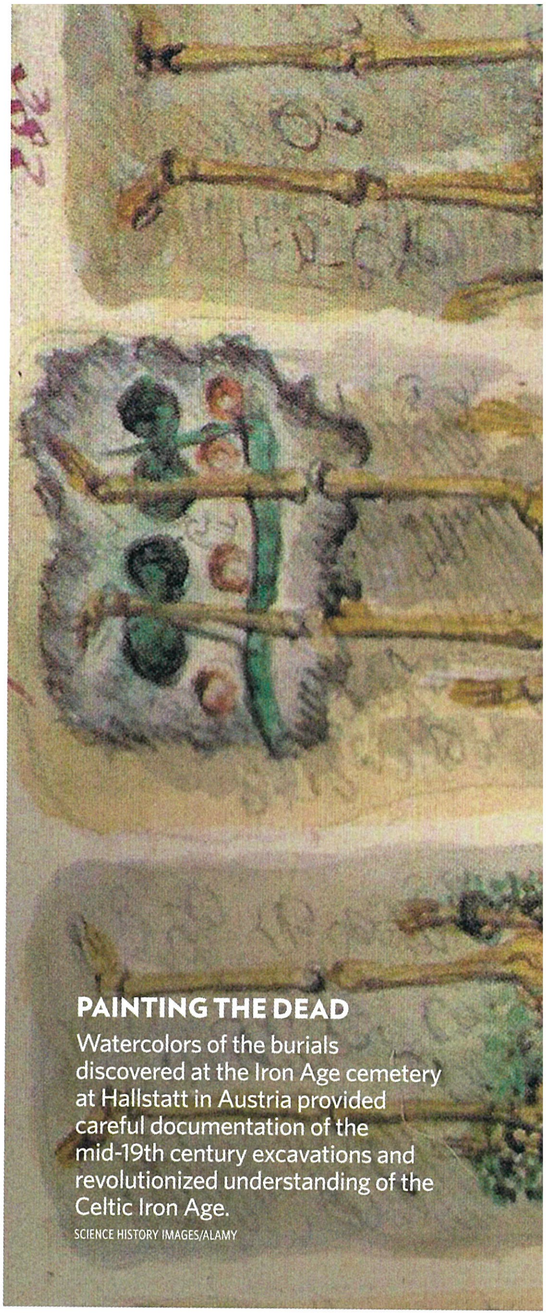

Extent of Hallstatt Culture 800-500 B.C.
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Black Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Extent of La Tène Culture 500-50 B.C.
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Black Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Exent of Roman Empire A.D. 350
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Black Sea
ROME
Mediterranean Sea
RPATHIANS
uncani
Mediaş
Black Sea
Danube
DACIA
Mezek
THRACE
Byzantium (Istanbul)
Ancyra (Ankara)
GALATIA
MACEDON
ANATOLIA
Aegean Sea
Bolu
Blucium
Peium
GREECE
Delphi
Athenae (Athens)
Ionian Sea
erranean Sea
Red Sea
🟩 Celtic culture, circa 800 B.C. -A.D. 100
▨ Area where Celtic languages are spoken today
∴ Alesia Type site
∴ Vix Major site
∴ Emporion Minor site
• Massilia (Marseille) City (Modern name)
0
200
400 miles
0
200
400 kilometers

Present-day drainage and coastlines are represented.
Modern city names appear in parentheses.

TRICHTINGEN TORQUE
SILVER NECK BAND, LA TÈNE CULTURE. WÜRTTEMBERG STATE MUSEUM, STUTTGART, GERMANY
AKG/ALBUM

earlier Greek authors to describe how hordes of Celts had poured down through the Alps into the Italian Peninsula in the fifth century B.C. Roman generals would later seek glory in subduing them: In his first-century B.C. conquest of Gaul, Julius Caesar wrote: "We call them Gauls, though in their own language they are called Celts."

Although the Roman imperial period ended Celtic military power, its presence lingered on in Europe's collective memory. Renaissance French and English scholars became interested in establishing facts about the pre-Roman peoples that once inhabited their lands. In the 1870s archaeologists were hugely excited to dig up items in northern Italy that were clearly Celtic in design and corroborated classical authors' accounts of the Celts invading Italy from the north around 450 B.C. Scholars were able to identify these artifacts as Celtic, thanks to the excavation of a spectacular site in Austria a few years before. The objects found there served as key pieces with which scholars could start to put together the Celtic jigsaw.



PAINTING THE DEAD
Watercolors of the burials discovered at the Iron Age cemetery at Hallstatt in Austria provided careful documentation of the mid-19th century excavations and revolutionized understanding of the Celtic Iron Age.
SCIENCE HISTORY IMAGES/ALAMY

Austrian Origins

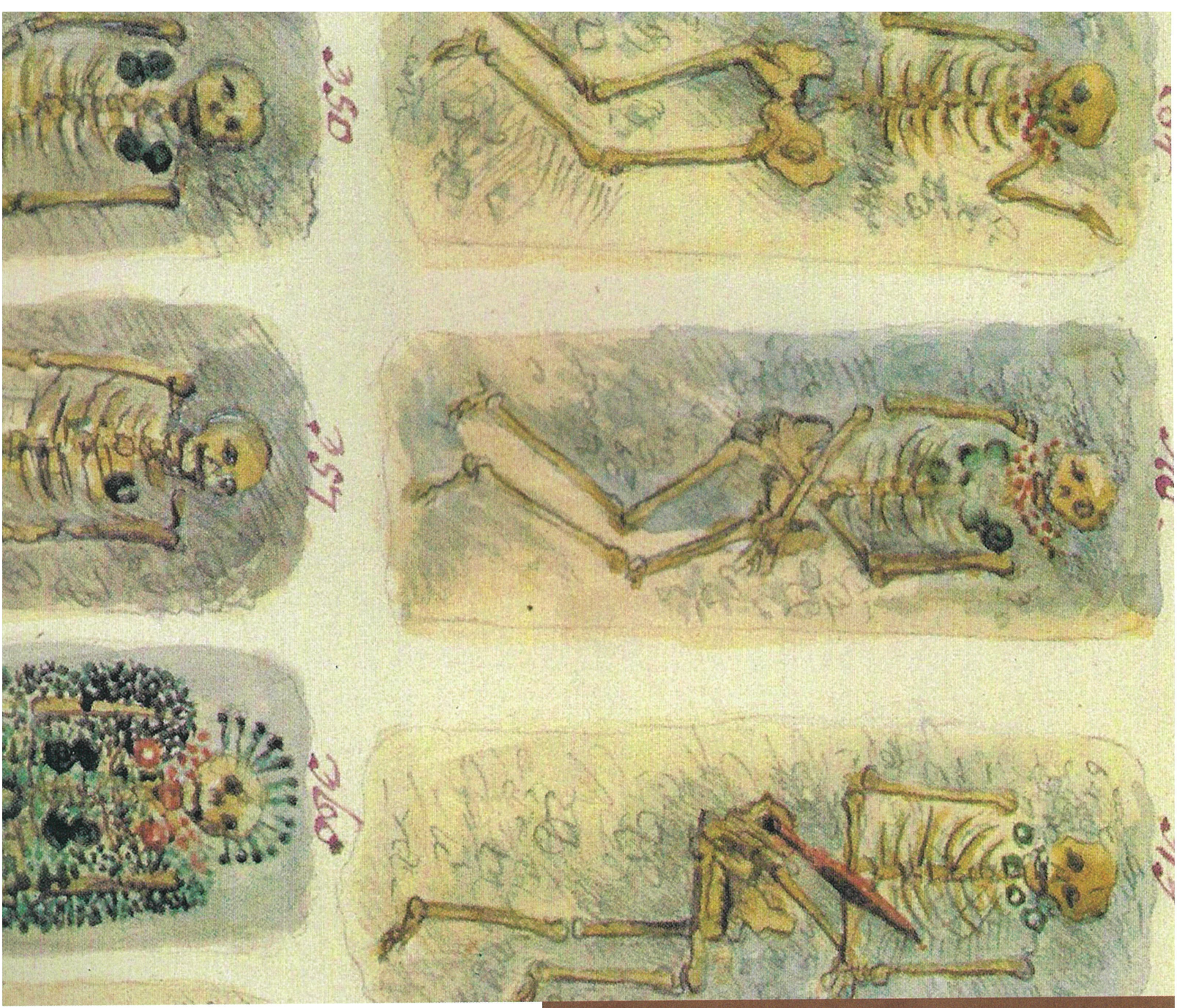
Set against a backdrop of mountains plunging into a lake, the tiny town of Hallstatt in Austria is a major tourist attraction today. Historians are also drawn to the town to study an ancient cemetery that lies alongside it. The burial sites were first discovered in 1846 by mining engineer Johann Georg Ramsauer, who went on to uncover over 900 burials (in total, the remains of 2,000 individuals have been found there). Dating to 800 B.C., the Hallstatt graves provide detailed evidence of an Iron Age community whose economy was based on nearby salt mines.

Hallstatt has become a "type site" and has given its name to a much wider culture that incorporates many other Celtic sites in what is now Austria, southern Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia. Objects found in all these regions share common traits, and together form a culture. At its height, in the seventh century B.C., this "Hallstatt culture" was formed by local chieftains, whose wealth derived from salt mining (in Hallstatt itself) or local agriculture. These sites featured elaborate tombs and burials. Among the artifacts were found distinctive weapons, like swords, made by their ironworkers. These objects, archaeologists believe, were traded for luxury goods, especially from Greek and Italian cultures.

Aside from similarities in the objects and

Hallstatt is a "type site." It gives its name to the Hallstatt culture, which is expressed in objects spread over a wide area.

HALLSTATT SWORD FOUND IN ZIEGELRODA, GERMANY, SEVENTH TO EIGHTH CENTURIES B.C.
BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

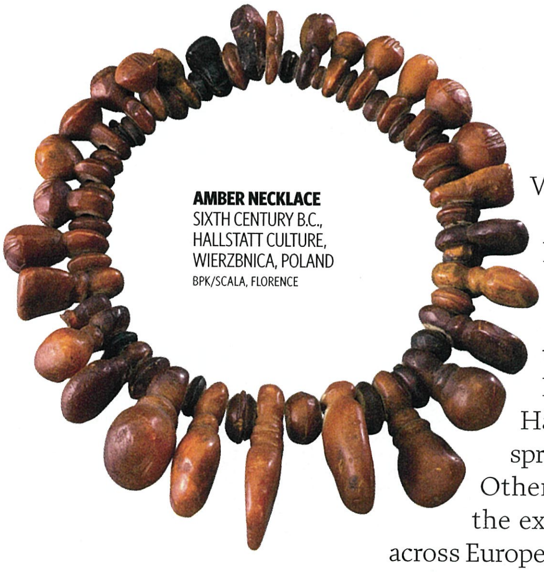


burial techniques, another important common thread links the Hallstatt culture: its language. The Hallstatt culture, therefore, can be regarded as Celtic. And the people who worked its mines and forges and fields—and their leaders, the chieftains who were buried with such pomp—were Celts.

As archaeologists began to piece together the finds across a series of Hallstatt sites, a question arose: If the Hallstatt culture of central Europe represented a Celtic "homeland," then where did the Celtic areas of western Europe—the western Iberian Peninsula, Brittany (northwestern France), and the British Isles—fit into the picture? In addition to being areas associated with modern notions of "Celtic identity," the Celtic languages of Scottish, Irish, and Manx Gaelic;

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE SALT MINES

IN THE 1800S salt was still central to the economy of Hallstatt, and Johann Georg Ramsauer became a mining apprentice at 13, which may seem an unlikely start for an career in archaeology. His awareness of the mines' long history helped him realize that the seven skeletons he uncovered in 1846 were part of an ancient cemetery of miners. With the help of an assistant, who meticulously produced watercolors of the remains (above), Ramsauer created vital documentation of the workers' objects found in the mines, including leather hats and iron tools. In the course of his career, he documented more than 900 skeletons from ancient history, which helped define the Celtic-speaking civilization of this region of Europe, dubbed the Hallstatt culture.



AMBER NECKLACE
SIXTH CENTURY B.C., HALLSTATT CULTURE, WIERZBNICA, POLAND
BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

Welsh; Cornish; and Breton are still spoken there, indicating Celtic heritage.

A traditional theory has been that, at the beginning of the Hallstatt period in the Late Bronze Age, peoples from the Hallstatt zone migrated west and spread Celtic language and customs. Other historians, however, point to the existence of Celtic place-names across Europe that date to before the Hallstatt period; they argue that the process may have happened in reverse. Communities in western Iberia, France, and British Isles—linked by sea routes—were the first Celtic speakers. Using trade (rather than migrating), they spread Celtic customs and language to central Europe, which would later develop into the Hallstatt culture. Complicating the picture further, this process then took a return route: Once the Hallstatt culture had become established, around 900 B.C., its customs spread westward again to places that were already associated with Celtic customs and language, such as western Iberia.

DANUBE DOORWAY
The remains of a sixth-century B.C. gate of the Heuneburg citadel were discovered in 2005. Heuneburg is sited near the source of the Danube River, southwest of Stuttgart, in southern Germany.
AP IMAGES/GTRES

Princely Glory

Historians divide the Hallstatt period into four stages, starting with Hallstatt A, whose origins may extend as far back as 1200 B.C. Many changes took place in the Hallstatt zone in the next few centuries, including a preference for burial over cremation, and the development of increasingly sophisticated iron-working. Horses were introduced around 800 B.C. It was in Hallstatt D, at this last stage of the culture, a period beginning in 600 B.C., that the newly arrived Greek colonists at Massilia in southern France first encountered the people they would call the Celts.

The Hallstatt culture was on the brink of a golden age by the time the Greeks had these early encounters. Gone were the days of small-scale cereal farming, herding, and handicraft production. And gone too was the fairly egalitarian social structures of these tribes. From the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., close trading ties with the Greeks, and later the Etruscans, a people of central Italy, led to an influx of wealth that elevated the chieftains. Magnificent hill forts were built to proclaim their influence and riches.

The booming population was able to create an agricultural surplus, enslave laborers, and amass raw materials such as metals, salt (from Hallstatt itself), amber from the Baltic, and furs. With these, the chieftains could buy luxury goods from the

The wine the Hallstatt princes drank—and often the vessels they drank from—were imported from the Mediterranean.

BRONZE FLAGON FEATURING CELTIC AND ETRUSCAN ELEMENTS, FIFTH CENTURY B.C. CELTIC MUSEUM, HALLEIN, AUSTRIA
ALAMY/ACI

south: wine, finely crafted metalwork, and decorated ceramics. Many of these artifacts have been uncovered in the elaborate burials of the wealthy elite, dubbed "princely tombs" by archaeologists.

The influence of Greece and Italy could also be found in Celtic architecture, such as the late Hallstatt site Heuneburg, in southern Germany near the source of the Danube River. Major excavations took place there between 1950 and 1979, and since 2004 an ongoing research project has been under way. The Heuneburg settlement was built around 620 B.C. on the summit of the hill. About twenty years later a spectacular adobe wall, mounted on a stone plinth, was added for protection. This building technique, inspired by Mediterranean design, was an unusual feature so far north. Many scholars believe Heuneburg

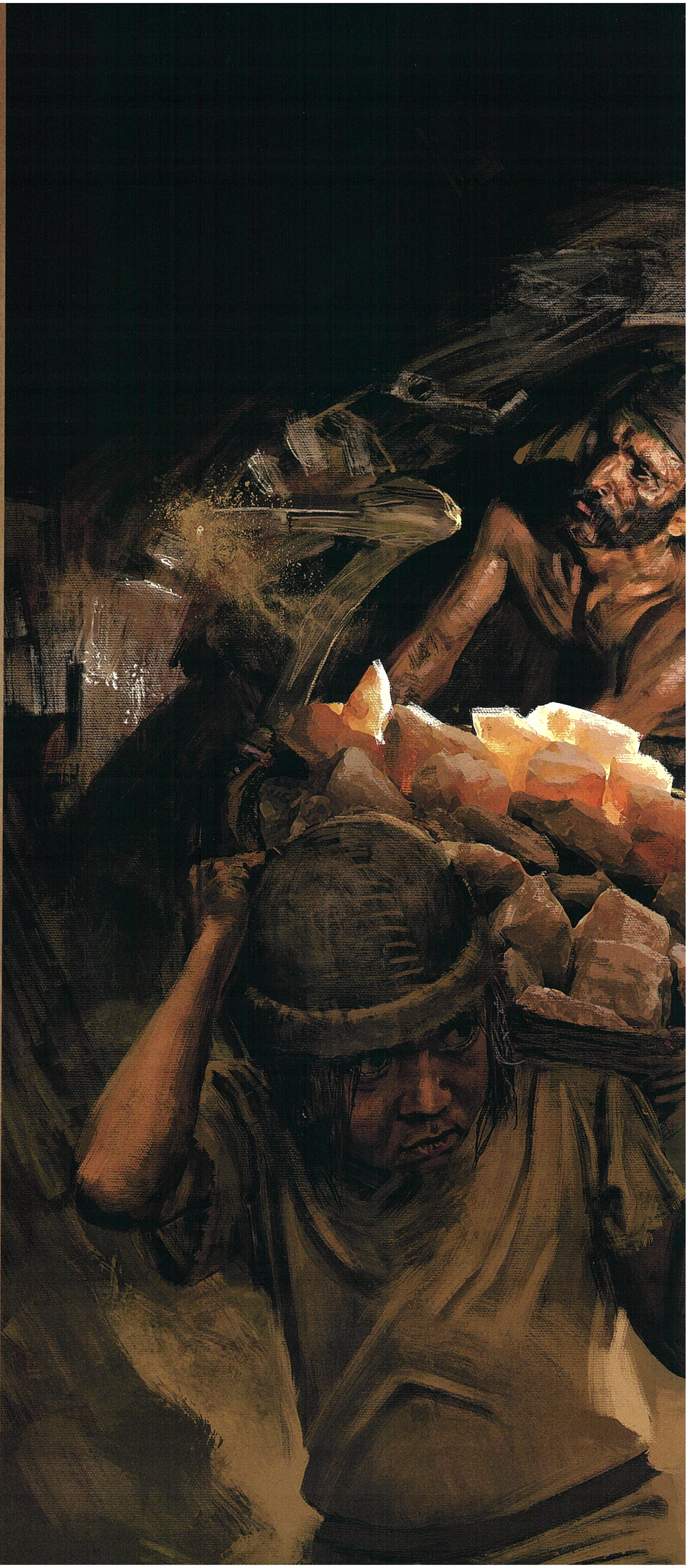
THE FIRST CITY OF THE NORTH?

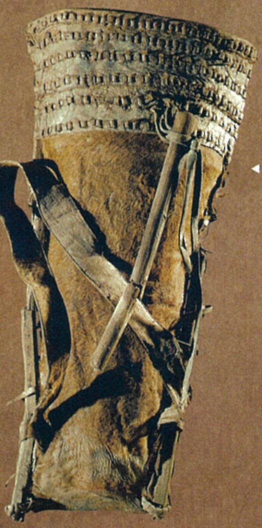
DISCOVERED IN THE 1800S, the hilltop site of Heuneburg near the source of the Danube in southern Germany, was initially regarded as a typical Hallstatt princely seat. Recent excavations have revealed a larger settlement of 100 hectares, once so densely populated that it is now regarded as a candidate for northern Europe's first city. Black-figure Greek pottery found there attests to extensive trading links with the Greek colony of Massilia (Marseille). Greek characteristics are also evident in the use of mud bricks for the construction of the hilltop fortifications. In 2005, excavators found a monumental gateway built in the sixth century B.C. Set into the citadel's 16-foot-high rampart, it would have dominated the landscape, a potent symbol of Celtic princely power.

WHITE GOLD

Salt was a vital part of the livelihood for people who lived in the mountains around Hallstatt for millennia: The nearby city of Salzburg ("salt castle") is even named for it. In the Bronze and Iron Ages, the mineral was extremely valuable for its ability to preserve fish and meat. At Hallstatt and Dürrnberg, around 40 miles away, salt was extracted via shafts 650 to 1,000 feet deep, lit by torches and reinforced with timbers. In addition to being the type site of a whole civilization, the miners' cemetery at Hallstatt also yielded clues about whatworkers wore and carried, as their tools were often buried alongside them.

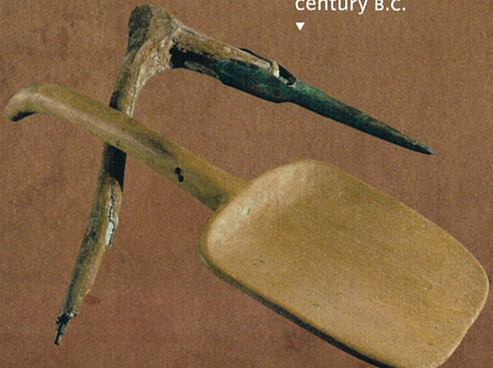
ILLUSTRATION: SAMSON GOETZE. **BELOW:** ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

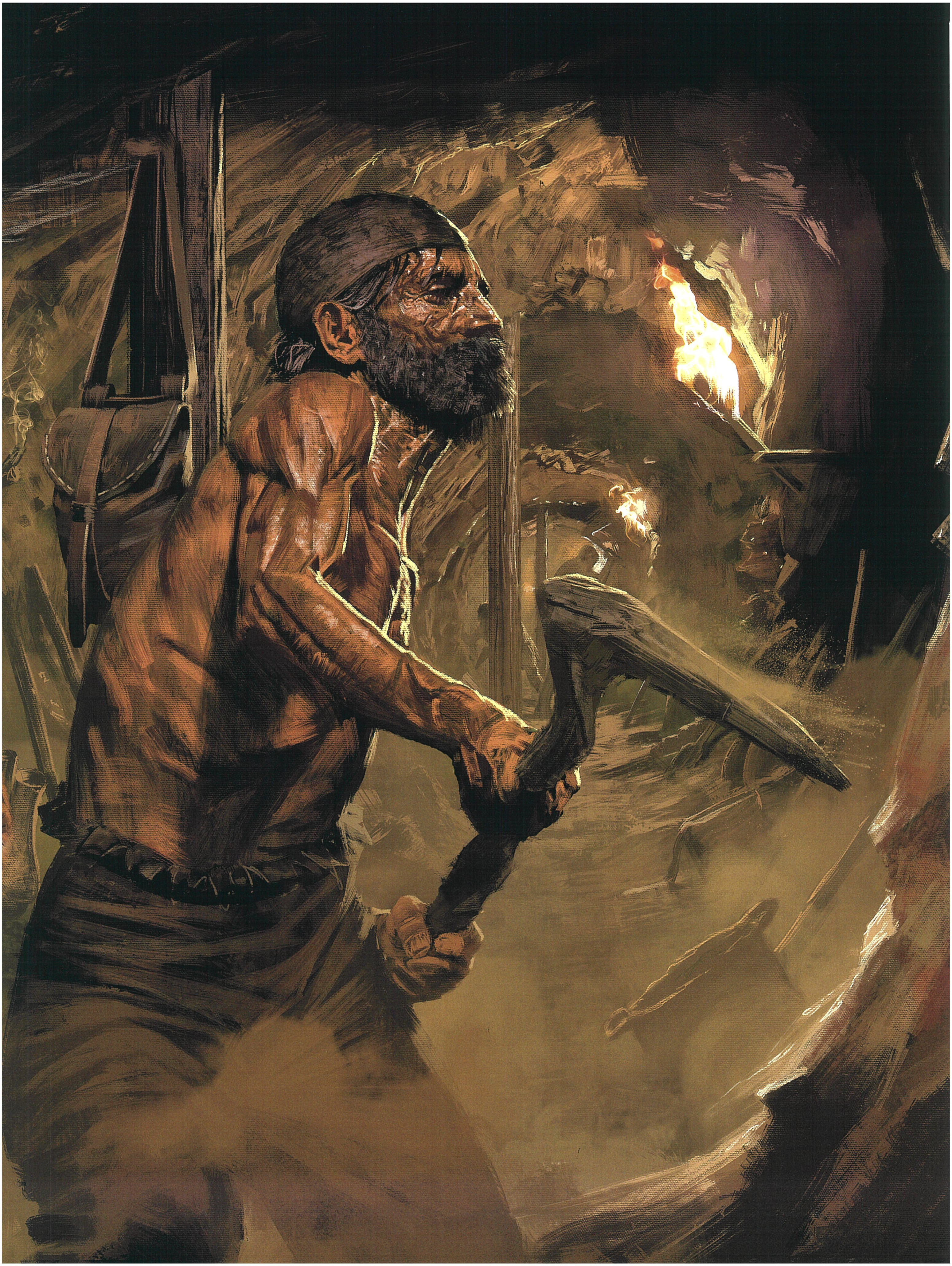




◂ **Backpack**
Made from cowhide and wood, this hod-style bag dates to the tenth or ninth century B.C.

Tools
Wooden shovel and bronze pick with a wooden handle used by miners. Tenth or ninth century B.C.
▾





INTRICATE WORK

A tiny gold sphere decorated with filigree (above) belonged to a gold-and-amber necklace found in the tomb of an elite woman at the site of Bettelbühl in southwestern Germany.

ALAMY/ACI

is the *polis* of Pyrene mentioned by the fifth-century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus in his *Histories,* making this the earliest reference to a city in northern Europe. The site occupied by Heuneburg extended far beyond its hilltop core and may have been home to some 5,000 inhabitants. By way of comparison, about 10,000 people lived in Athens during this period.

Another jewel of the late Hallstatt period is a lavish tomb at Vix in modern-day Burgundy, France, containing the remains of a woman who died around 480 B.C. The grave contained traditionally feminine adornments, including a gold torque (neck ring). Standing out among the grave goods is a vast Greek wine-mixing pot, or krater. Made of bronze and weighing 458 pounds, it was probably hauled 380 miles from Massilia, and it would have been the last word in Greek luxury.

New discoveries are still being made about the opulence of Hallstatt sites, although many have been scoured by plowing over the centuries. One such site is at Bettelbühl, not far from Heuneburg, where initial digging uncovered the burial of a wealthy child dating to the sixth century B.C.

In 2010 another large burial chamber was detected close by. Its oak structure had been well preserved by immersion in a stream, but the site itself was at risk from farming. It was decided to extract the chamber and move it to the laboratories of the Archaeological State Office of Baden-Württemberg for close study. After the structure was transferred, analysis of the wood lining of the chamber dated it to the late sixth century B.C.

Two burials were found inside the chamber. The first belonged to a woman in her 30s, buried with lavish funerary objects, including two gold fibulae and a beautifully crafted gold sphere; these treasures, which may have been locally made, reveal a strong Mediterranean influence.

The second burial's remains were too degraded for a conclusive identification. The grave goods near this body were more modest: a simple bronze bracelet on each wrist and one bronze ornament near the head.

GRAVE MOVE

Workers lift the 80-ton section of earth containing an intact burial chamber from the site of Bettelbühl, Germany, in December 2010.

AP IMAGES/GTRES

Cultural Transitions

Lavish royal tombs became rarer in the late Hallstatt, but one in Lavau, France, is remarkable not only for its wealth but also for the presence of distinctly Mediterranean objects. Around 130 feet in diameter, the tomb formed part of a necropolis that had been in use since the Late Bronze Age. Inside the burial chamber was a body accompanied by a very rich collection of grave goods: gold bracelets, an iron-and-gold brooch, an amber necklace, and a leather belt

The jewelry found in the Bettelbühl tomb shows Mediterranean inspiration in its design.

TWO GOLD FIBULAE (BROOCHES), SIXTH CENTURY B.C., BETTELBÜHL, GERMANY

AP IMAGES/GTRES

adorned with silver threads. The most spectacular find at Lavau was a large bronze cauldron used at banquets, decorated around the edge with eight feline heads and four heads of the Greek river god Achelous.

The body in the tomb at Lavau was initially assumed to be that of a man and a later CT scan of the skeleton's pelvis confirmed it. The tomb was dated to around 450 B.C., during a transitional period in Celtic culture.

Dramatic changes were occurring in the Hallstatt zone. As princely burials were becoming rare, settlements, including Heuneburg, were abandoned. Trading routes shifted away from the Rhône River, which may have disrupted the Celtic economy. As Hallstatt culture waned, a vigorous new Celtic culture was rising on its

THE ETRUSCAN FINDS OF BETTELBÜHL

THE FIRST EXCAVATION at Bettelbühl found two gold fibulae (brooches) among the grave goods of a young child. Two more fibulae were found among an elite woman's grave goods in a later excavation. All the pieces look similar; they probably came from the same workshop and may even have been made by the same craftsman. All bear traits of the style associated with the Etruscans, a pre-Roman civilization in central Italy who traded with the Celts. Recently, researchers have documented a small fragment of gold wire excavated in a workshop at the nearby Hallstatt site of Heuneburg. It is identical to the wires of the four fibulae. Had these objects made their way there on the Mediterranean trade routes? Or was an Etruscan goldsmith living in Heuneburg?

NOBLE TORQUE

A golden torque from the fifth century B.C. (above) was found at Glauberg. The Celts associated the neck ring with gods and the nobility. The three pointed features are known as balusters, and are a notable feature of Celtic metalwork.

AKG/ALBUM

THE PRINCE OF GLAUBERG. STANDING OVER SIX FEET HIGH, THIS IMPOSING SANDSTONE FIGURE DEPICTS A PRINCELY WARRIOR. LA TÈNE PERIOD, FIFTH CENTURY B.C. GLAUBERG MUSEUM, GERMANY

AKG/ALBUM

periphery in what is now France, southern Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

This new wave is named for the site of La Tène in Switzerland, an Iron Age settlement near Lake Neuchâtel that was discovered in the mid-19th century. The La Tène culture bears some of the most iconic motifs associated with Celtic culture today: interlaced geometric designs, rooted in complex belief systems that historians are still unraveling. The reach of the La Tène culture was extensive: It had spread to the British Isles by around 400 B.C.

Unable to rely solely on trade for survival, the La Tène elites were notably warlike. A good example of this shift to the martial is the site of a chieftain's residence at Glauberg in central Germany. A large sandstone statue, later dubbed "the Prince of Glauberg," was found near a tumulus there. The fierce, bearded figure is armed with a sword closely associated with the La Tène style, shield, and cuirass, all highlighting his identity as a warrior.

The emerging power of Rome was to witness the new reputation of these restive peoples moving farther south. By the mid-fifth century B.C., the martial nature of the La Tène communities was noisily and violently expressing itself in raiding parties, moving farther afield before crossing into the rich lands of northern Italy.

Later Roman writers believed the Celts were motivated to invade Italy out of envy for its fine wine, but historians now believe that the Celtic migrations were spurred by overpopulation. Young warrior leaders, chafing under the restrictions of established chieftains, saw the attraction of raising their own followers and striking out on their own.

In 390 B.C. the Celts finally came for Rome itself. The Senones, a tribe newly arrived in Italy, overcame Roman forces near the city and flooded into the capital. Referring to them as Gauls, Livy's account of their sack of the city reveals how the savagery of the Celts would haunt Rome. He chronicles "the shouts of the enemy, the cries of women and children, the crackling of the flames, and the crash of falling houses." Romans, he wrote, ran "hither and thither, terrified to see [terrible things] wherever they looked, as if placed by fortune to be spectators of their falling country."

A century later, Celtic armies had another prize in their sight: In 279 B.C., after settling areas of the Balkans, Celtic forces attempted to capture the riches of the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. They were defeated by the Greeks, but some of the scattered army, along with other Balkan Celts, went on to found the area in central Turkey known by the Greeks as Galatia, derived from the Greek word for "Gaul." Later, Galatia's earliest Christians were the subject of a missive in around A.D. 50, a document that is now the ninth book of the New Testament: St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.

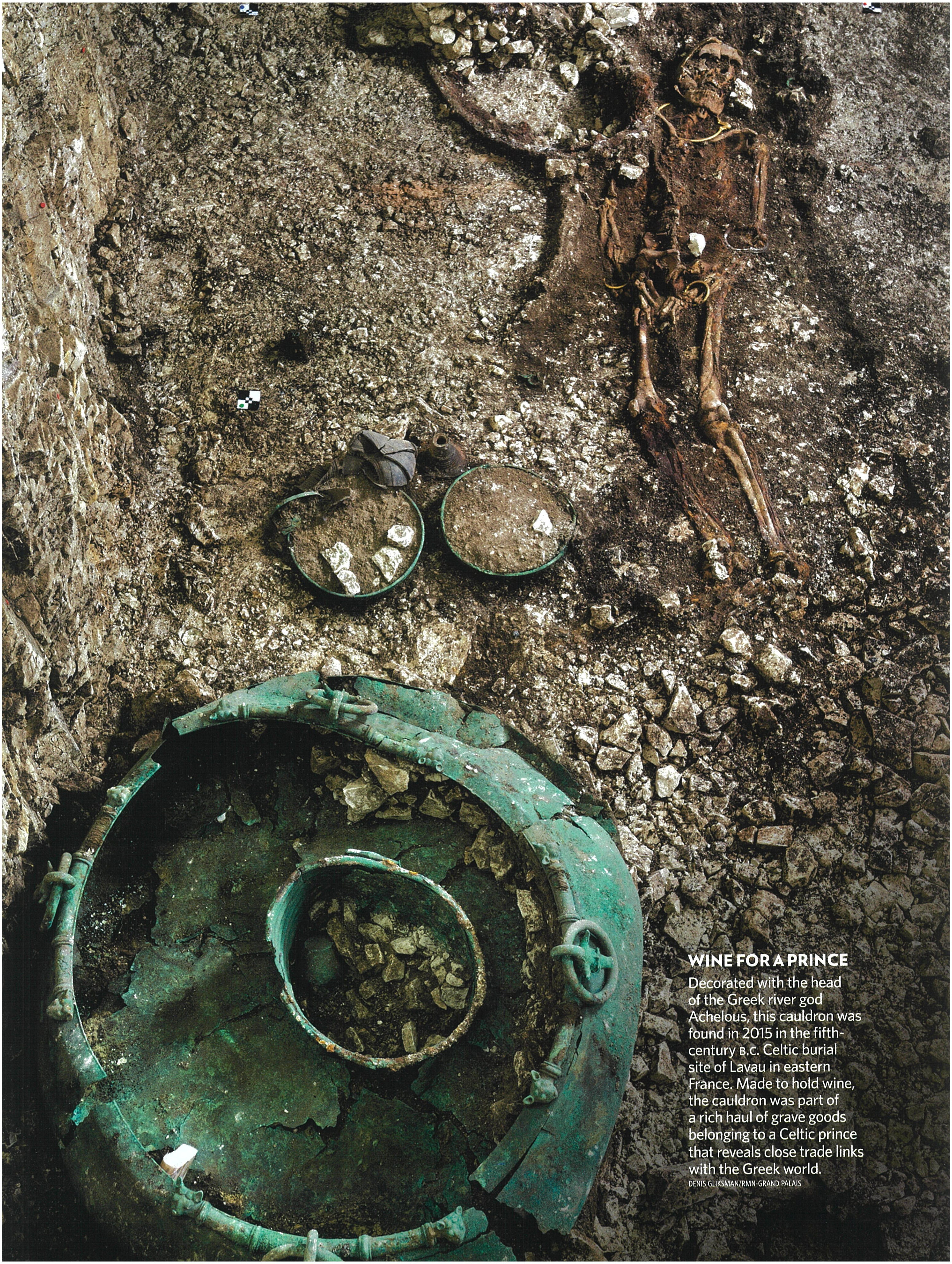
Rome's rise to dominance eroded Celtic power and identity all over Europe. Latin authors started to cast Celts less as brutal barbarians, and more as "noble savages," supposedly offering a contrast with Roman luxury. Based partly on these accounts, scholarly interest in the Celts was revived in the modern period, paving the way for the spectacular finds of the mid-1800s at Hallstatt and La Tène.

The huge amount of archaeological evidence that has accrued since then has not exempted the study of Celts from academic controversy. Central to the debate is how, and if, the term "Celt" can be applied to modern populations in western Europe. The latter view provokes passionate reactions. In a 2002 BBC discussion on the Celts, Scottish historian Alistair Moffat inveighed against theories that the Celts of the Iron Age and the "Celts" of modern-day Scotland, Wales, and Ireland are disconnected: "Of course they're Celts, of course they share a cultural coherence all down the west of Britain . . . These Celtic languages [i.e., Scottish, Irish, and Manx Gaelic] still exist. All the others have died, and they're still alive here . . . and they hold inside them two and a half thousand years of history." ■

HISTORIAN **BORJA PELEGERO** SPECIALIZES IN THE ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN THE CLASSICAL WORLD AND THE PEOPLES WHO LIVED ON ITS BORDERS.

Learn more

The Ancient Celts
Barry Cunliffe, Oxford University Press, 2018.



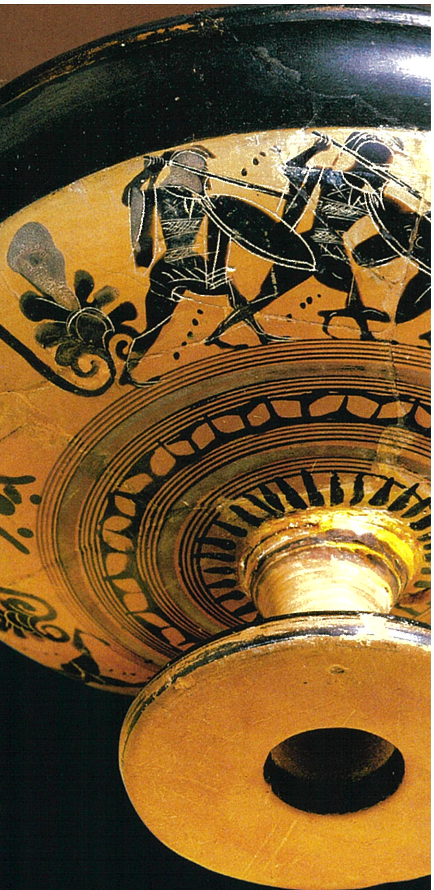
WINE FOR A PRINCE

Decorated with the head of the Greek river god Achelous, this cauldron was found in 2015 in the fifth-century B.C. Celtic burial site of Lavau in eastern France. Made to hold wine, the cauldron was part of a rich haul of grave goods belonging to a Celtic prince that reveals close trade links with the Greek world.

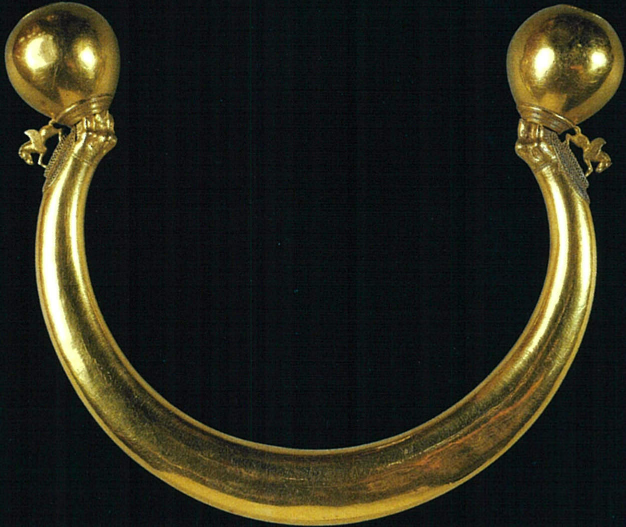
DENIS GLIKSMAN/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

THE VIX TREASURE

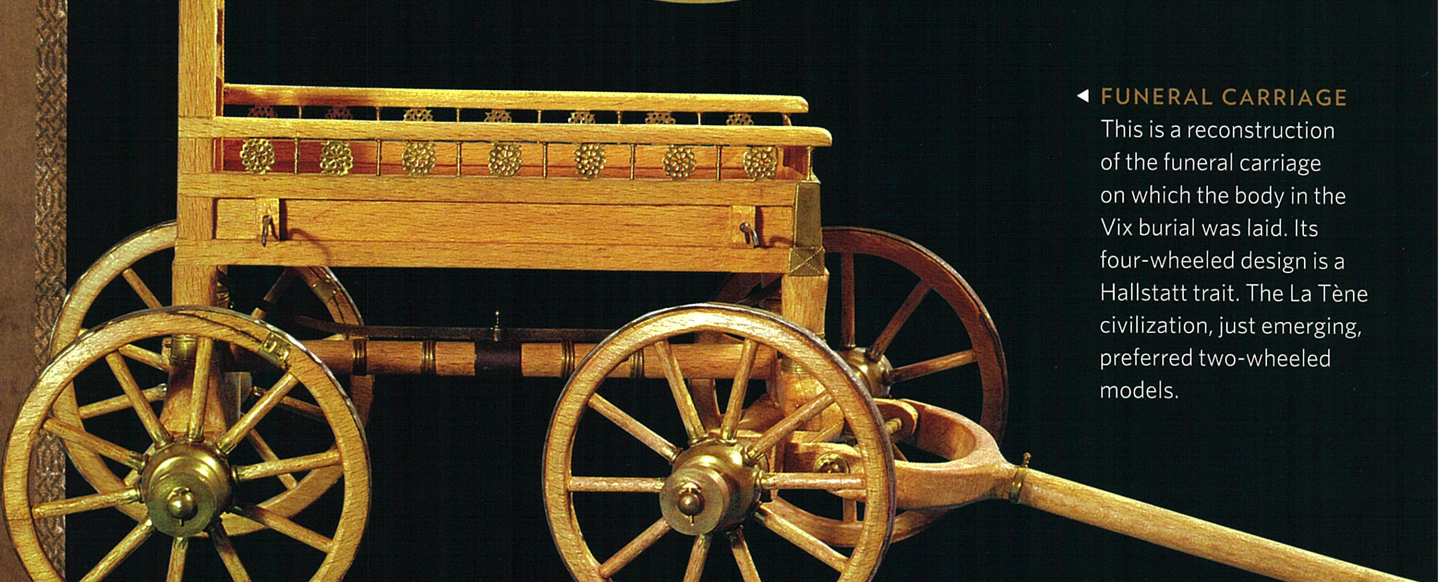
Discovered near Vix in 1953, the grave goods of a Celtic noblewoman (now held by the Museum of the Pays Châtillonnais, in Burgundy, France) reflect both native Celtic styles and influences of the Greek world during the later Hallstatt period. The noblewoman died around 480 B.C., as the Hallstatt culture was declining.



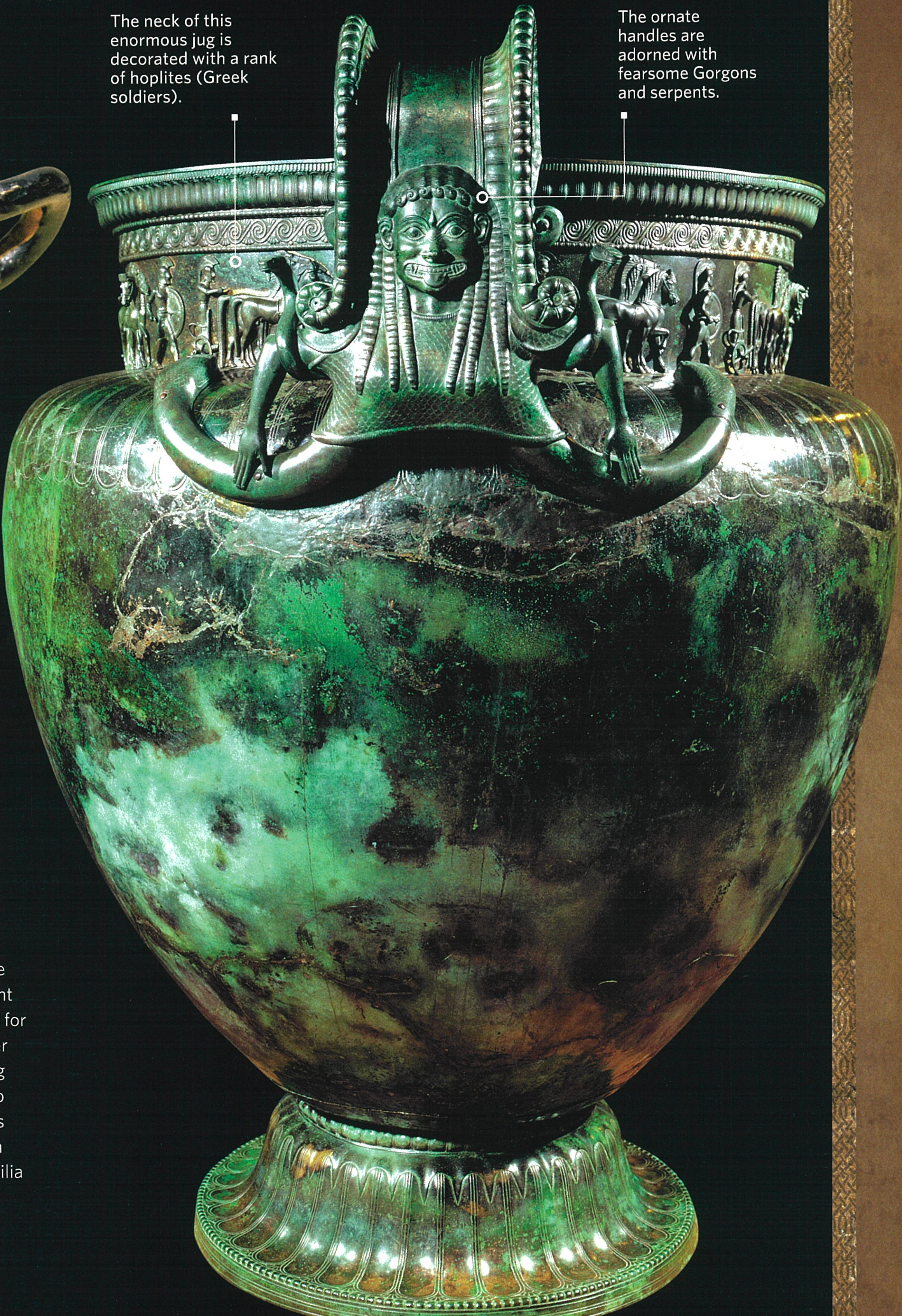
▲ **KYLIX**
This wine cup is made in the Attic style and decorated with black figures of hoplites (Greek soldiers). It is a quintessentially Greek luxury item that had made a long journey north along the trade routes from the Mediterranean.



GOLD TORQUE ▶
Closely associated with Celtic style, this torque (neck ring) is decorated with two winged horses.



◀ **FUNERAL CARRIAGE**
This is a reconstruction of the funeral carriage on which the body in the Vix burial was laid. Its four-wheeled design is a Hallstatt trait. The La Tène civilization, just emerging, preferred two-wheeled models.



The neck of this enormous jug is decorated with a rank of hoplites (Greek soldiers).

The ornate handles are adorned with fearsome Gorgons and serpents.

KRATER ▸
Standing more than five feet tall, this magnificent bronze krater was used for diluting wine with water during feasts. Weighing 458 pounds and able to hold 290 gallons, it was probably acquired from Greek traders via Massilia (Marseille).

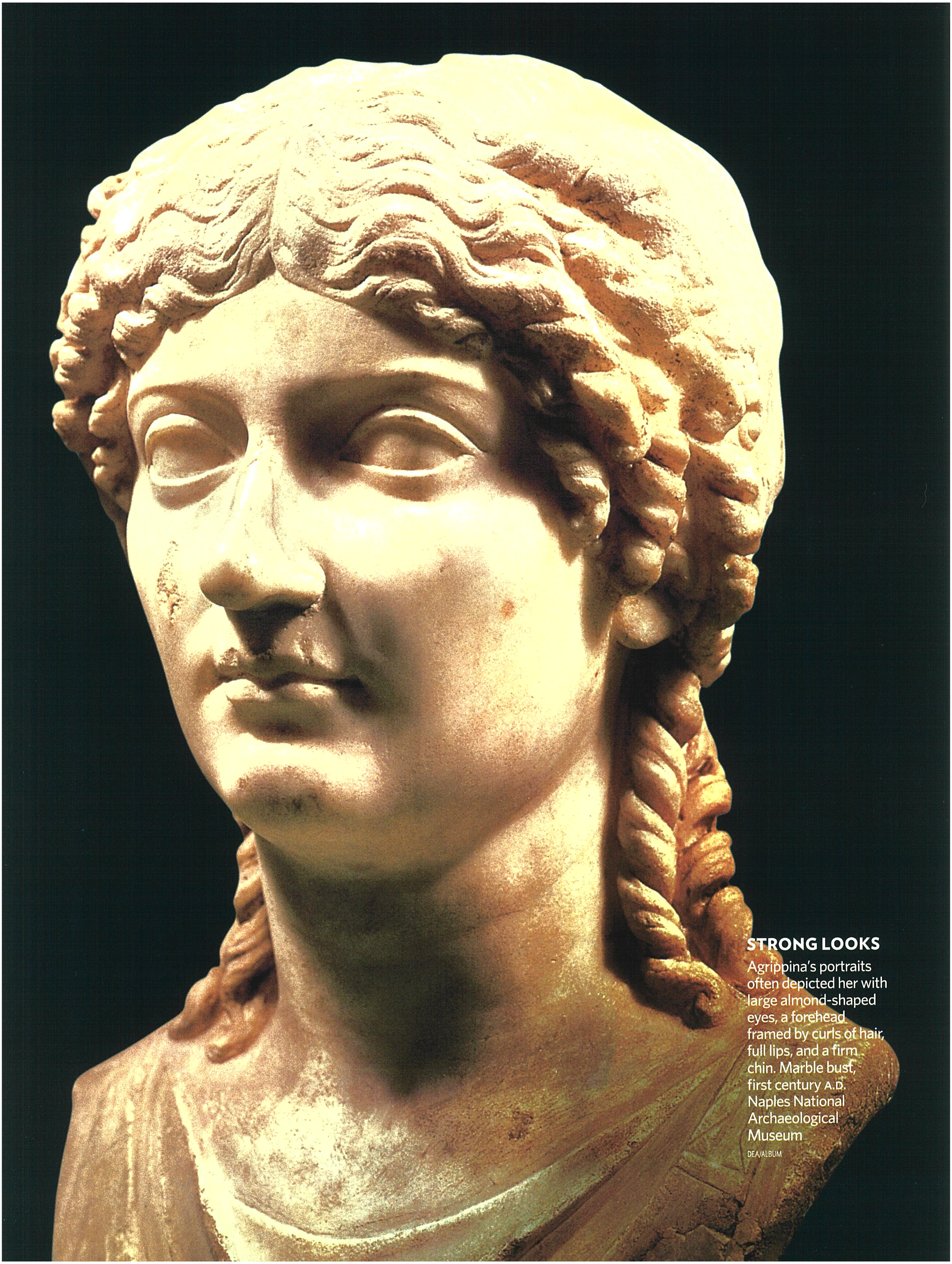
KYLIX: ERICH LESSING/ALBUM. **ALL OTHER IMAGES:** AGE FOTOSTOCK

AGRIPPINA

IMPERIAL AMBITIONS

Surrounded by emperors for much of her life, Agrippina learned how to fight for power. Refusing to settle for a traditional Roman woman's role, the great-granddaughter of Augustus opted to compete in the political arena and won power for her and her son.

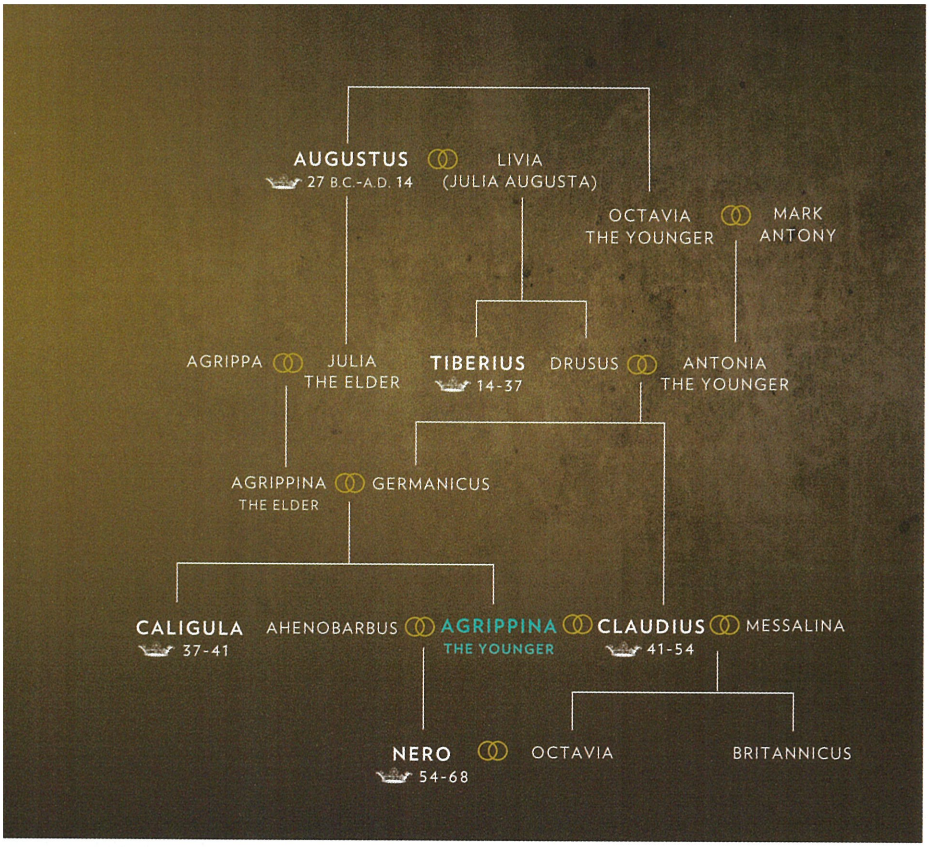
ISABEL BARCELÓ

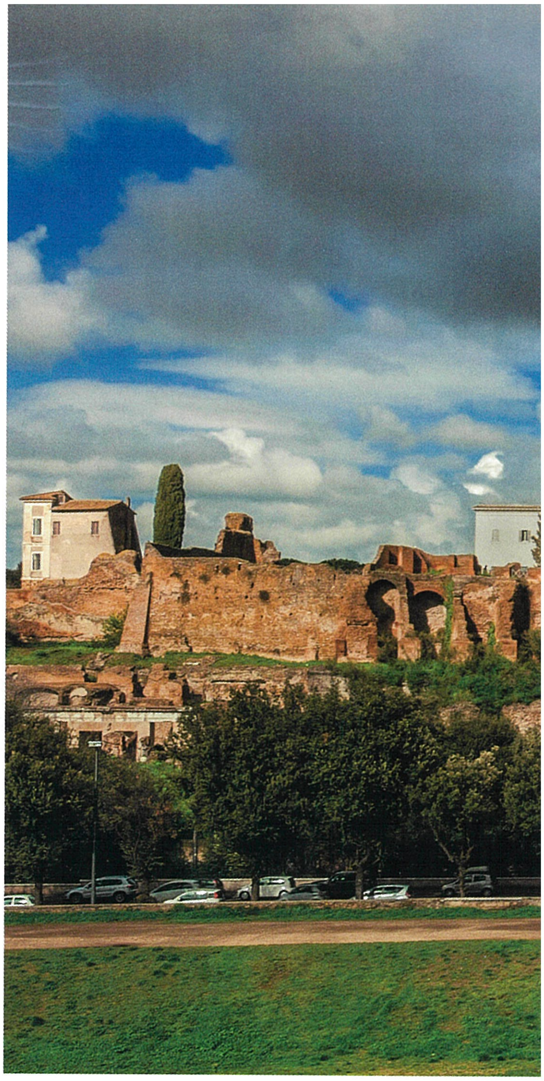


STRONG LOOKS

Agrippina's portraits often depicted her with large almond-shaped eyes, a forehead framed by curls of hair, full lips, and a firm chin. Marble bust, first century A.D. Naples National Archaeological Museum

DEA/ALBUM


AUGUSTUS
27 B.C.–A.D. 14
LIVIA
(JULIA AUGUSTA)
OCTAVIA
THE YOUNGER
MARK
ANTONY
AGRIPPA
JULIA
THE ELDER
TIBERIUS
14-37
DRUSUS
ANTONIA
THE YOUNGER
AGRIPPINA
THE ELDER
GERMANICUS
CALIGULA
37-41
AHENOBARBUS
AGRIPPINA
THE YOUNGER
CLAUDIUS
41-54
MESSALINA
NERO
54-68
OCTAVIA
BRITANNICUS



TANGLED ANCESTRY

Agrippina the Younger and the emperors Caligula and Nero were biological descendants of Augustus, founder of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (above).

Nobody could question Agrippina's imperial credentials: great granddaughter of Augustus, great-niece of Tiberius (granddaughter of Drusus), sister to Caligula, wife of Claudius, and mother to Nero. Like her male relatives, she enjoyed great influence. Honored with the title Augusta in A.D. 50, she wielded political power like a man—and paid the price for it.

Agrippina recorded her life in a series of memoirs, in which, according to first-century historian Tacitus, she "handed down to posterity the story of her life and of the misfortunes of her family." Unfortunately, her writings—and her authentic perspective—have been lost. Most of what is known about her comes from secondhand sources written after her death. Many contemporary historians condemned her for violating Rome's patriarchal structure with her naked ambition. Many blamed her for the actions of her son, Nero. While describing her at times as irrational, perverted, and unscrupulous, some historians, however, bestowed a grudging admiration for Agrippina, such as Tacitus when describing the moment she became empress of Rome:

> *From this moment, the country was transformed. Complete obedience was accorded to a woman—and not a woman . . . who toyed with national affairs to satisfy her appetites. This was a rigorous, almost masculine despotism. In public, Agrippina was austere and often arrogant. Her private life was chaste—unless there was power to be gained. Her passion to acquire money was unbounded. She wanted it as a stepping-stone to supremacy.*

FEMALE CAESAR

A.D. 15

Agrippina is born in a military garrison in Germania to Agrippina the Elder (granddaughter of Augustus) and Germanicus, a general and nephew of Emperor Tiberius.

AGRIPPINA AND CLAUDIUS (ON LEFT) OPPOSITE HER PARENTS. CAMEO, A.D. 48. KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM, VIENNA

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

A.D. 37

The emperor Tiberius dies and is succeeded by Caligula, Agrippina's brother. In December she gives birth to Nero, son of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus.

IMPERIAL REAL ESTATE

Palatine Hill was the location of choice for imperial residences. The image shows the Palatine ruins from the former site of the Circus Maximus, the largest hippodrome in the Roman world.

CRISTIANO FRONTEDDU/ALAMY/ACI

Of course Agrippina is not the only powerful woman in history to have been treated unfairly by scholars, but this bias against her has motivated today's historians to revisit her life and accomplishments to assess their effects on the Roman Empire.

Famous Family

Around A.D. 15, Agrippina was born in a military camp on the banks of the Rhine to an influential Roman power: Germanicus, nephew and adopted son of the emperor Tiberius and a candidate to succeed him, and Agrippina the Elder, Augustus' favorite granddaughter.

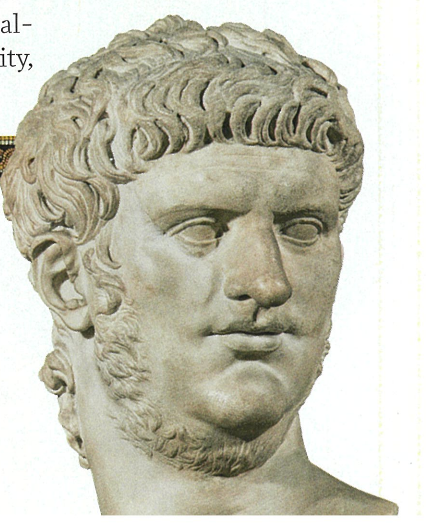
When Agrippina was just four years old, Germanicus died of poisoning in Syria, a crime that her mother always attributed to Tiberius. Agrippina the Elder claimed that the emperor Tiberius feared Germanicus's popularity with the army, believing that military support would eventually allow Germanicus to usurp the emperor and take his place. Whether or not Tiberius was responsible for poisoning Germanicus, he did deny his adopted son the honor of a public funeral.

Germanicus's widow, the indomitable Agrippina the Elder, arrived in Rome with her husband's ashes, in what became an open challenge to the emperor. With the greatest dignity,

SON AND MURDERER

A first-century bust (below) depicts Nero, who in A.D. 54 became Roman emperor, at age 16. Initially promising reform, Nero was guided in the first few years by Agrippina until he gave orders for her murder in 59.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



A.D. 49

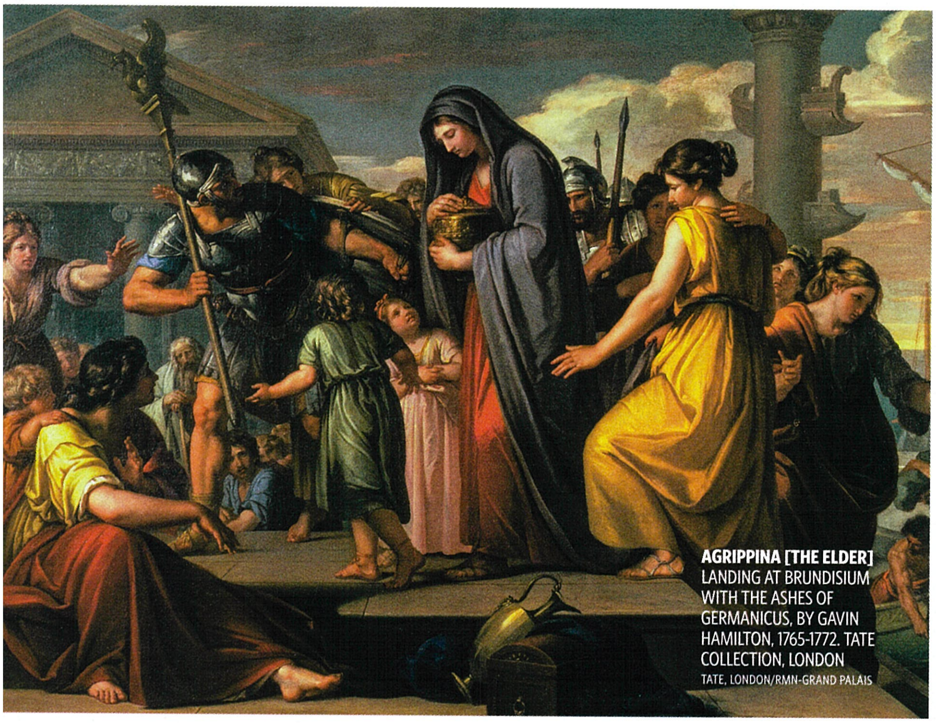
The widow Agrippina marries her uncle, Emperor Claudius, and secures a political marriage between her son Nero and her husband's daughter, Octavia. The following year she will receive the title Augusta.

A.D. 54

After Claudius dies, some believe Agrippina caused his death to secure her son's position as heir. On the same day, the army and the Senate acclaim Nero as the new emperor.

A.D. 59

Having survived Nero's attempt to kill her, Agrippina is murdered by her son's henchmen. Nero rushes to the scene to confirm her death and quickly dispose of the body.



AGRIPPINA [THE ELDER] LANDING AT BRUNDISIUM WITH THE ASHES OF GERMANICUS, BY GAVIN HAMILTON, 1765-1772. TATE COLLECTION, LONDON

TATE, LONDON/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

CASTAWAYS

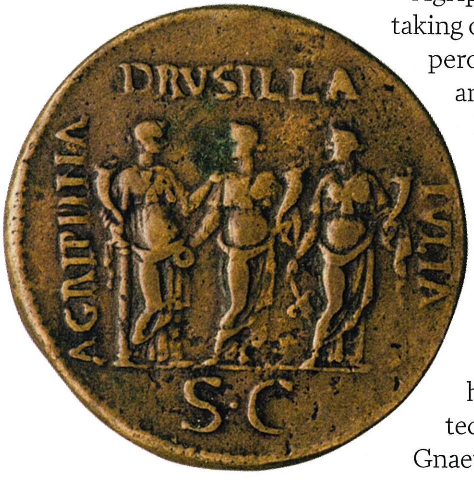
The Pontine archipelago, 25 miles off the coast of western Italy, was used by emperors to exile their enemies. Like her mother, who had died in exile on this island seven years earlier, Agrippina was briefly banished here in A.D. 40.

DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

FAMILY PORTRAIT

During his reign, Caligula had a coin minted with his image on one side, and, on the other (below), the figures of his three sisters: Agrippina, Drusilla, and Livilla. National Archaeological Museum, Siena

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



she took the urn containing the ashes and, accompanied by her children and a huge crowd of mourning citizens, she led a silent procession through the streets of Rome to the mausoleum of Augustus, where she deposited it. Tiberius was furious at his daughter-in-law's defiance and never forgave her.

The younger Agrippina apparently received a solid education, and there is no doubt of her intelligence, nor of her determination and strength. From an early age, she certainly understood the workings of the imperial court and how a woman could maneuver within it. Her great-grandmother Livia, grandmother Antonia, and her mother taught her the mechanisms and dangers of life at court.

Agrippina the Elder would pay dearly for taking on Tiberius. A few years later, the emperor had her two eldest sons murdered and banished her to one of the Pontine Islands where she died. These horrors, observed by Agrippina the Younger, while still a child, scarred her deeply and left an indelible mark on her thinking. It was here that she grew up and where early trauma forged her character. She decided not to challenge power head-on, at least at first, as her mother had done, but rather to protect herself through marriage to a cousin, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus.

Brother and Emperor

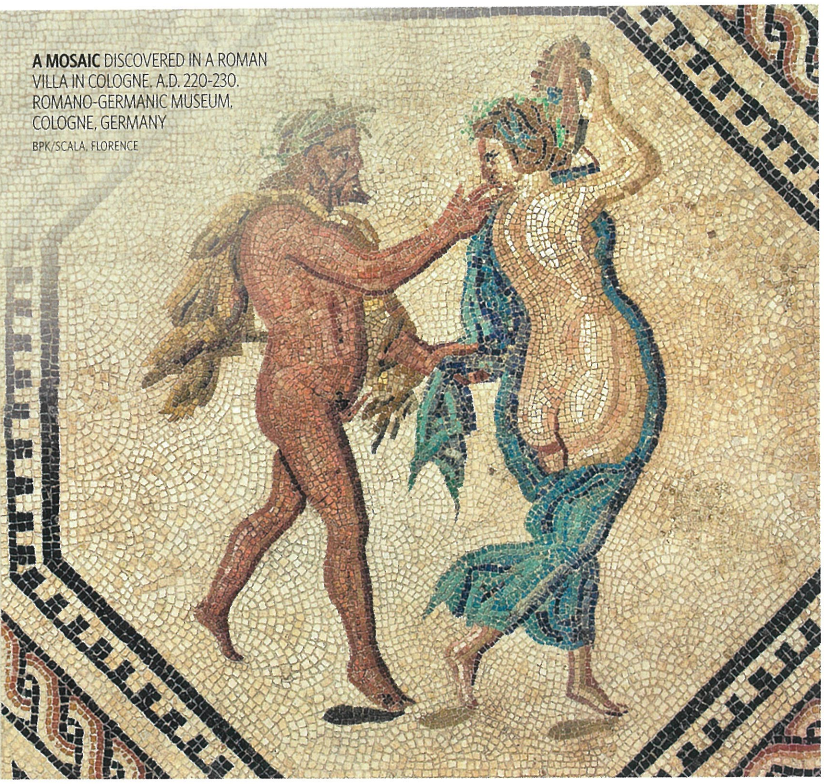
Agrippina began to make waves when her brother Caligula became emperor in A.D. 37. It is to this era that the earliest surviving image of her dates. A coin minted with Caligula's effigy on the front features his three sisters on the back. Depicted as Securitas, the security and strength of the empire, Agrippina leans on a column alongside her sisters Drusilla and Livilla, representing Concord and Fortune. The new emperor Caligula showered his three sisters with honors, included them in official prayers, and even had consuls conclude their proposals to the Senate with the formula "Favor and good fortune attend Gaius Caesar and his sisters."

Agrippina grew popular during this time. At age 22, she gave birth to her only biological child, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, who would become better known as Nero. From the very beginning, Agrippina was resolute in one aim: to see her son become emperor. It was not unreasonable, given her elite family credentials, nor was it unusual: Roman matrons were expected to promote their children's interests.

FROM COLONY TO CAPITAL

BIRTHPLACE OF THE EMPRESS

Agrippina, in her role as Augusta, founded a Roman colony near her birthplace in what is today western Germany. Her father, Germanicus, had been stationed at a military outpost along the Rhine when Agrippina was born there in A.D. 15. After Agrippina elevated it, the colony was named Colonia Claudia Augusta Ara Agrippinensium (Colony of Claudius Near the Altar of the Agrippinians) but referred to as Colonia. The colony grew and became a major urban center, serving as the capital city of the Roman province Germania Inferior. Today it is known in English as Cologne, Germany's fourth largest city.



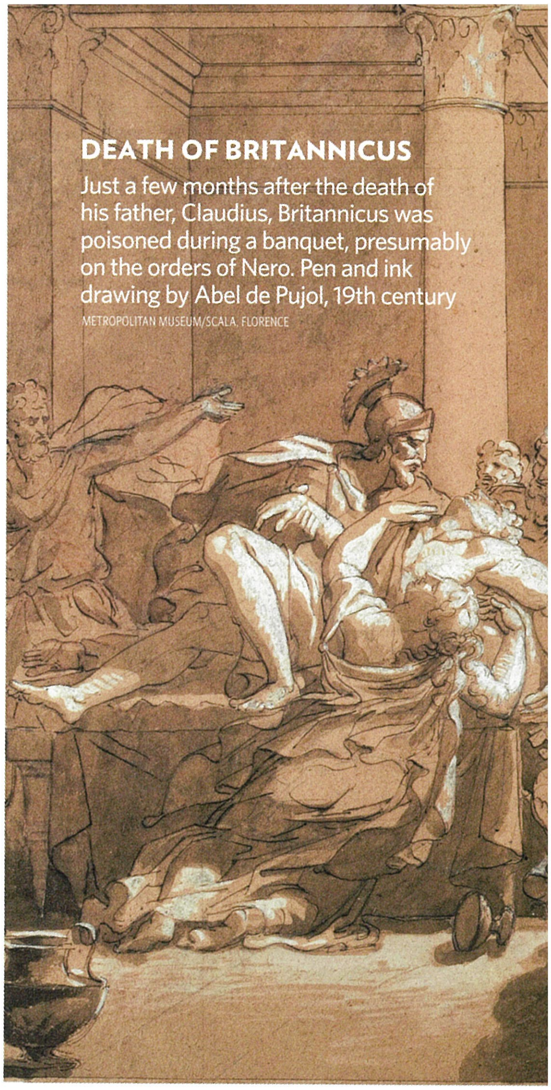
A MOSAIC DISCOVERED IN A ROMAN VILLA IN COLOGNE, A.D. 220-230. ROMANO-GERMANIC MUSEUM, COLOGNE, GERMANY

BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE

A TEMPLE FOR CLAUDIUS

Agrippina had a temple built in honor of her deceased husband on Caelian Hill, near where the Colosseum (above, left) would later be built. The complex was destroyed by fire in A.D. 64.

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS



DEATH OF BRITANNICUS

Just a few months after the death of his father, Claudius, Britannicus was poisoned during a banquet, presumably on the orders of Nero. Pen and ink drawing by Abel de Pujol, 19th century

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

In Agrippina's case, she had a strong personal drive to get involved in politics. In a society that kept women out of government, it was unthinkable that she, by herself, could enter the arena. Through Nero, she had a chance to grasp power, but securing the imperial throne for him would be both difficult and dangerous.

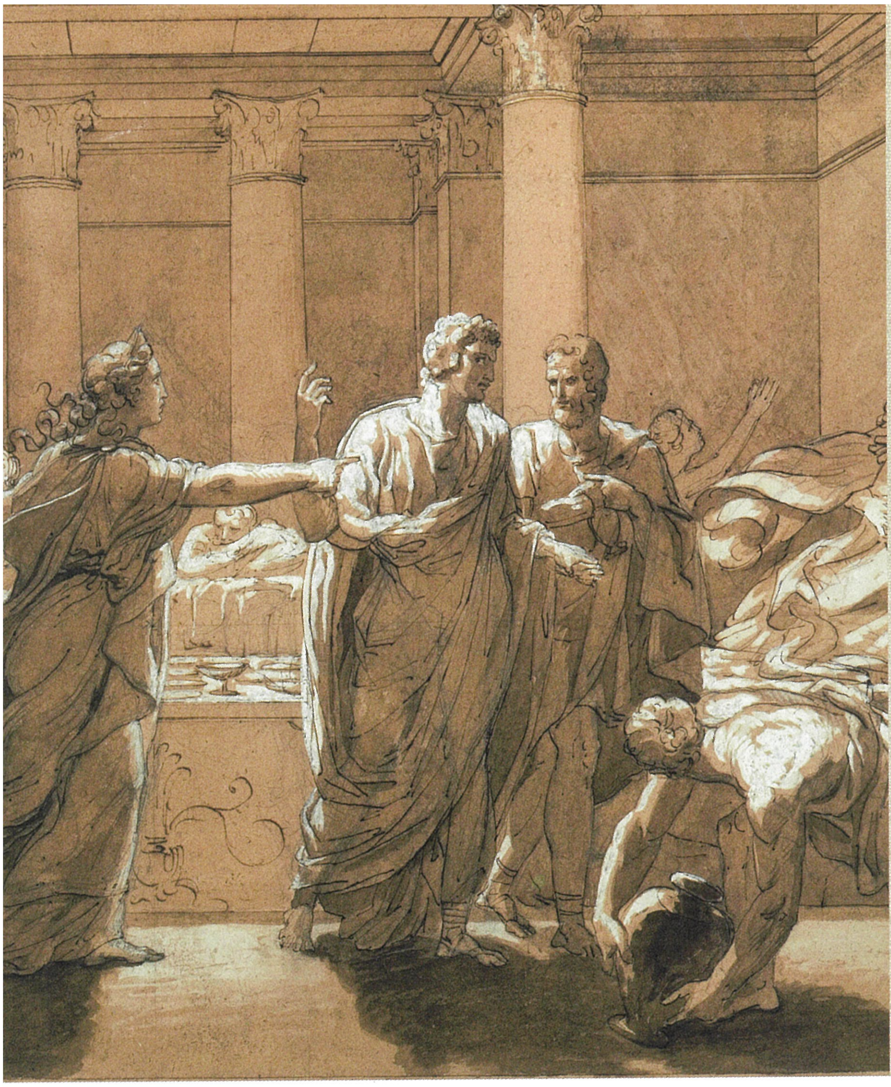
Caligula became seriously ill and, when he regained his health, began a bloody purge to eliminate rivals, reminiscent of the worst violence of Tiberius. Agrippina, having allegedly conspired in a plot to overthrow her brother, was accused of immoral conduct and exiled to the Pontine Islands. A year later, Caligula's assassination unleashed a new wave of chaos before Agrippina's paternal uncle, Claudius, took over as emperor in January, A.D. 41. Rome's new ruler reversed the sentence on his niece and allowed her to return to Rome. That same month, Agrippina became a widow after Ahenobarbus died, but she quickly remarried. Claudius arranged a union with a wealthy, well-connected man, Crispus, who had served twice as consul. The marriage lasted until Crispus' death in 47, which left Agrippina a very wealthy widow. Rumors spread that she had caused her husband's demise after he named her his heir.

Uncle and Niece

A year later, Claudius was widowed and began looking for a new wife. Despite Agrippina being his biological niece, her imperial ancestry made her a strong marital candidate. She was beautiful, still young, and brought with her, her son, who, as Germanicus's grandson, was, in the words of Tacitus, "thoroughly worthy of imperial rank." Claudius hoped that in this way she "would not carry off the grandeur of the Caesars to some other house."

Roman historians attributed Claudius's choice to manipulation. Tacitus wrote that "Agrippina's seductiveness was a help. Visiting her uncle frequently . . . she tempted into giving her the preference." Writing in the second century, the historian Suetonius was more condemning in his language: "[I]t was Agrippina . . . who hooked him. She had a niece's privilege of kissing and caressing Claudius, and exercised it with a noticeable effect on his passions."

The marriage between Claudius and Agrippina, was celebrated in A.D. 49. With skill and tact she established a close relationship with the Senate, imposed order and moderation in the courts, and worked alongside her husband in imperial matters. She earned the title of Augusta



PARENTAL RIVALRY

MESSALINA AND AGRIPPINA

One of Agrippina's most fearsome political rivals was Messalina, third wife of Claudius. Writing some 70 years after her death, Roman historians described Messalina as being powerful and influential but completely immoral and lascivious; her husband was in her thrall, unwilling to see her manipulations. Shortly after Claudius became emperor, Messalina gave birth to their son Britannicus, who had the strongest position to become his heir. Messalina ruthlessly tried to eliminate potential rivals—including Agrippina and her son Nero—through gossip, exile, and even murder. Messalina would eventually be undone by her numerous intrigues and affairs. The Praetorian Guard would execute her after word spread of her involvement in a plot to overthrow Claudius and make Britannicus emperor. With her rival out of the way, Agrippina smartly maneuvered to become Claudius's next wife, unseat Britannicus as heir, and secure succession for Nero.

and, in an unprecedented step, would appear standing beside the emperor in public.

On one occasion, a British king, Caratacus, together with his wife and children, were paraded in chains through the streets of the city as prisoners of war. They were finally brought before Claudius to beg for mercy. Enthroned on a dais, surrounded by praetors, the emperor was moved to hear the speech of the condemned man, spared him and his family, and set them free. Caratacus thanked the emperor and then went before Agrippina, seated in a separate gallery, and thanked her too. "It was an innovation, certainly, and one without precedent in ancient custom, that a woman should sit in state before Roman standards: it was the advertisement of her claim to a partnership in the empire which her ancestors had created," wrote Tacitus.

Agrippina's own history, shaped by violent power struggles, prompted her to plan for her son's ascent to the imperial throne with as little violence as possible. She knew that the road to power was not straightforward given that Claudius already had a biological son, although younger, named Britannicus. The empress knew it was important to establish in people's minds that Nero, and not Britannicus, was the obvious successor. Agrippina worked behind the scenes to ensure this outcome. Agrippina made it a condition of her marriage to Claudius, that Nero would marry Octavia, Claudius's youngest daughter. Nero appeared in public with the imperial couple and was showered with commission and honors. As a last step he became the emperor's legally adopted son. Nero's preeminence over Claudius's younger son, Britannicus, was assured.

Claudius's health was generally poor and a death by natural causes would have been quite plausible. Even so, many blamed the emperor's death in A.D. 54 on Agrippina and theorized that she ordered him to be poisoned to ensure he would not rescind the commitment to pass the throne to Nero. No proof of Agrippina's involvement exists, but the story has stuck.

Mother and Son

Soon after Claudius's death, Agrippina acted quickly. Within just a few hours, the teenaged

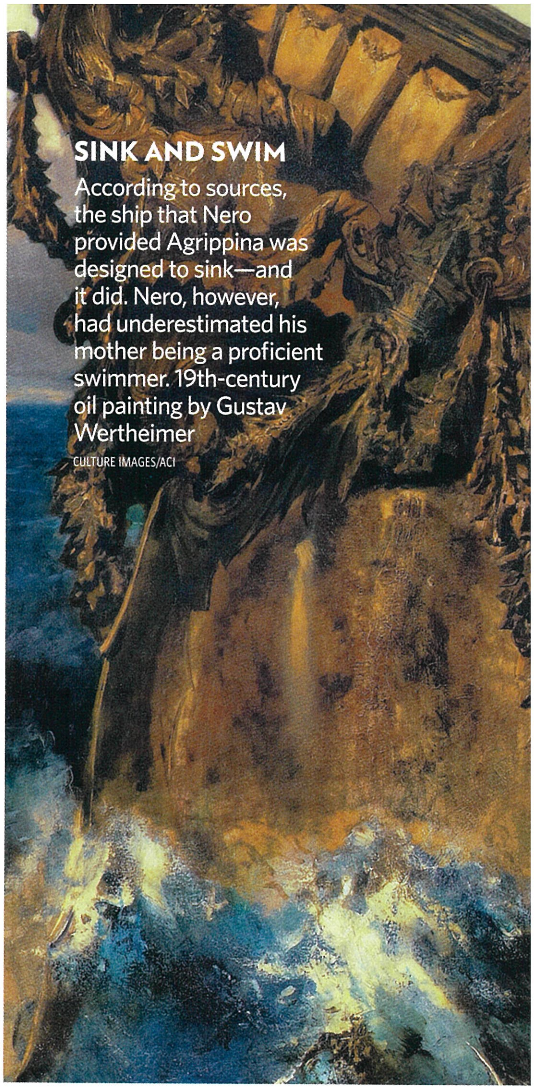
BRITISH INVASION

Rome conquered Britain during Claudius's reign and founded its first colony at Colchester, England, where a bronze statue of Claudius (below) was later found. British Museum

SCALA, FLORENCE

A ROMAN MOSAIC
SUBMERGED IN THE GULF OF NAPLES, CLOSE TO THE TOWN WHERE AGRIPPINA DIED

ANTONIO BUSIELLO



SINK AND SWIM

According to sources, the ship that Nero provided Agrippina was designed to sink—and it did. Nero, however, had underestimated his mother being a proficient swimmer. 19th-century oil painting by Gustav Wertheimer

CULTURE IMAGES/ACI

IMPERIAL GAZE

A basanite head of Agrippina the Younger (below) was once part of a full-length statue produced early in the reign of Nero, when she was at the zenith of her power. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

ADAM EASTLAND/ALAMY

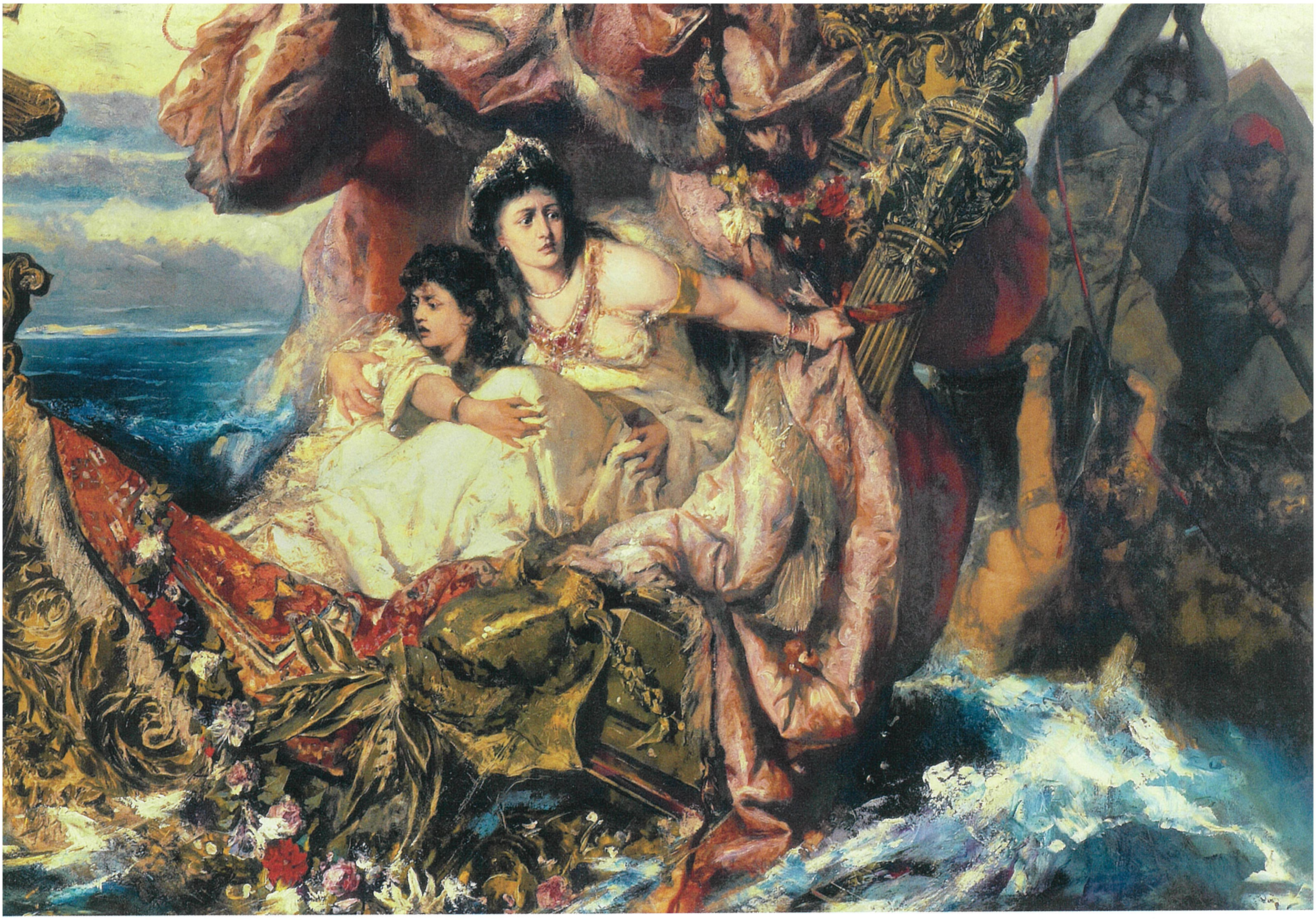
Nero was being acclaimed emperor by the army and the Senate. His close relationship with his mother was well known and well scrutinized. Suetonius related how Nero announced during his funeral oration for Claudius that Agrippina would be taking over his public and private affairs. An interesting detail: "On the day of his accession the password he gave to the colonel on duty was 'The Best of Mothers'; and she and he often rode out together through the streets in her litter." Rumors that the two were incestuously involved were reported by historians as well.

Agrippina's influence and Nero's gratitude would wane over time. Nero's advisers Seneca and Burrus, who had been appointed by Agrippina, now held newfound power and used it to sideline her. Far from accepting her new role, Agrippina tried, unsuccessfully, to continue to influence her son. He enjoyed popularity at the start of his reign, but things would start to unravel. Familial tensions would increase over politics and Nero's choice of companions. The already unbearable tension between mother and son was compounded when Nero had Britannicus assassinated.

Within a year of Nero becoming emperor, Agrippina was ordered to leave the imperial residence and relocated to an estate in Misenum. She had been cast out from the inner circle of power, but she was not safe from her son. Nero tried to drown her by sabotaging a boat, but she survived. Undeterred, Nero sent assassins to the villa where Agrippina had taken refuge and had her murdered there in A.D. 59. There were no funeral honors. To cover up the matricide, Nero and his advisers crafted a misogynistic cover story, attributing various crimes to her, according to Tacitus, that included, "[aiming] at a share of empire, and at inducing the praetorian cohorts to swear obedience to a woman, to the disgrace of the Senate and people." Her reputation lay shattered, and her birthday would be classed as an inauspicious day.

Despite the innuendos and criticisms, begrudging respect for Agrippina was expressed by some Roman historians. Tacitus wrote: "This was the end which Agrippina had anticipated for years. The prospect had not daunted her. When she asked astrologers about Nero, they had answered that he would become emperor but kill his mother. Her reply was, 'Let him kill me—provided he becomes emperor!'" ■

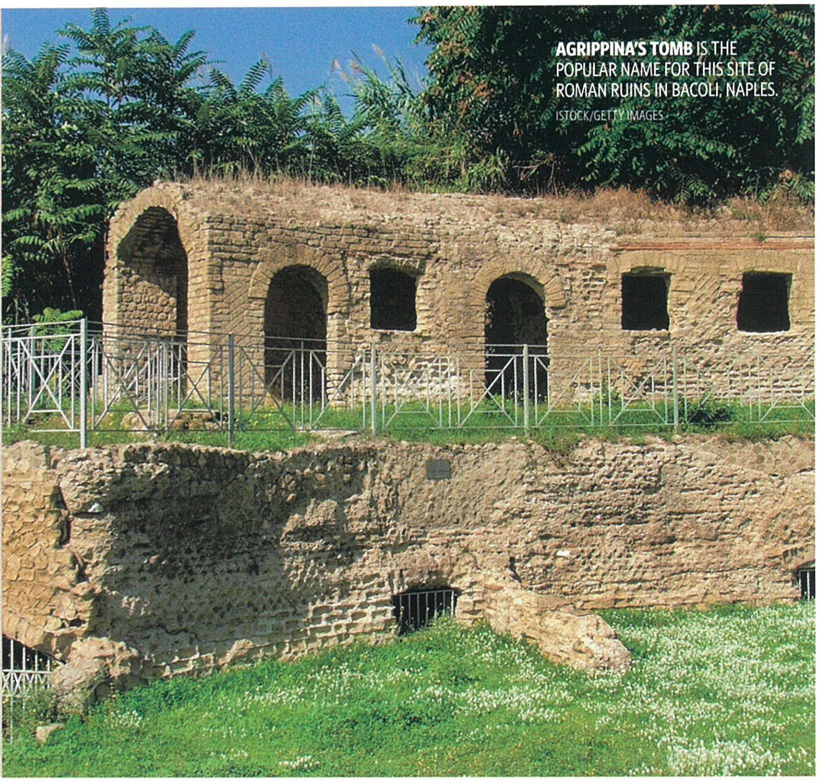
HISTORIAN **ISABEL BARCELÓ** HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ON FEMALE ROMAN RULERS.



MYSTERY SITE

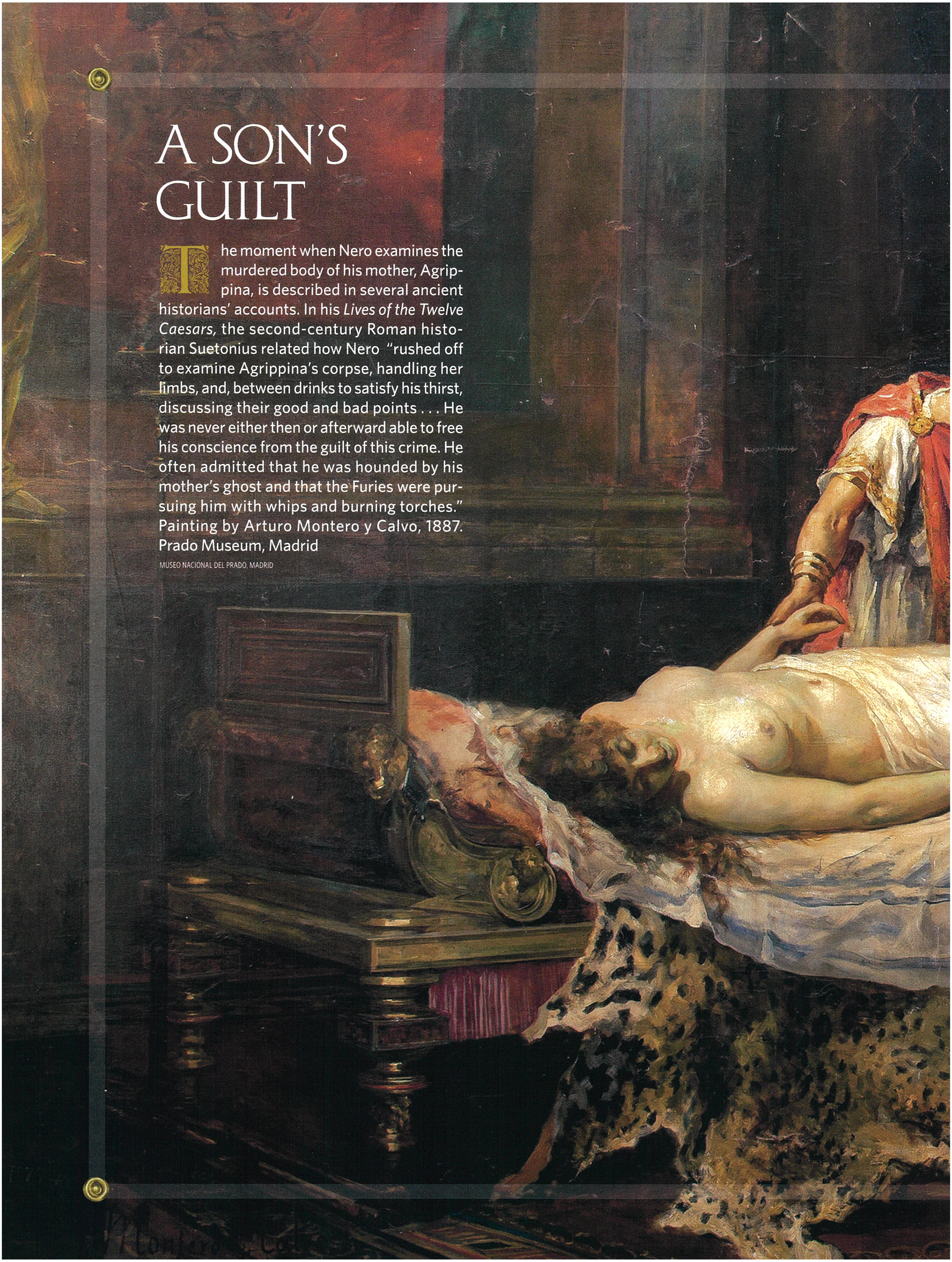
AGRIPPINA'S ASHES

Most contemporary sources agreed that Agrippina was cremated shortly after her death with little or no public ceremony. First-century historian Tacitus reported: "While Nero reigned, her grave was not covered with earth or enclosed, though later her household gave her a modest tomb beside the road to Misenum," near her estate where she had lived after being exiled from Rome. Located in the Bacoli region of Naples, there are ruins known today as Agrippina's Tomb, but it is unlikely that this structure was her actual resting place. Some archaeologists believe the ruins are an odeon and part of a maritime villa rather than a graveyard.



AGRIPPINA'S TOMB IS THE POPULAR NAME FOR THIS SITE OF ROMAN RUINS IN BACOLI, NAPLES.

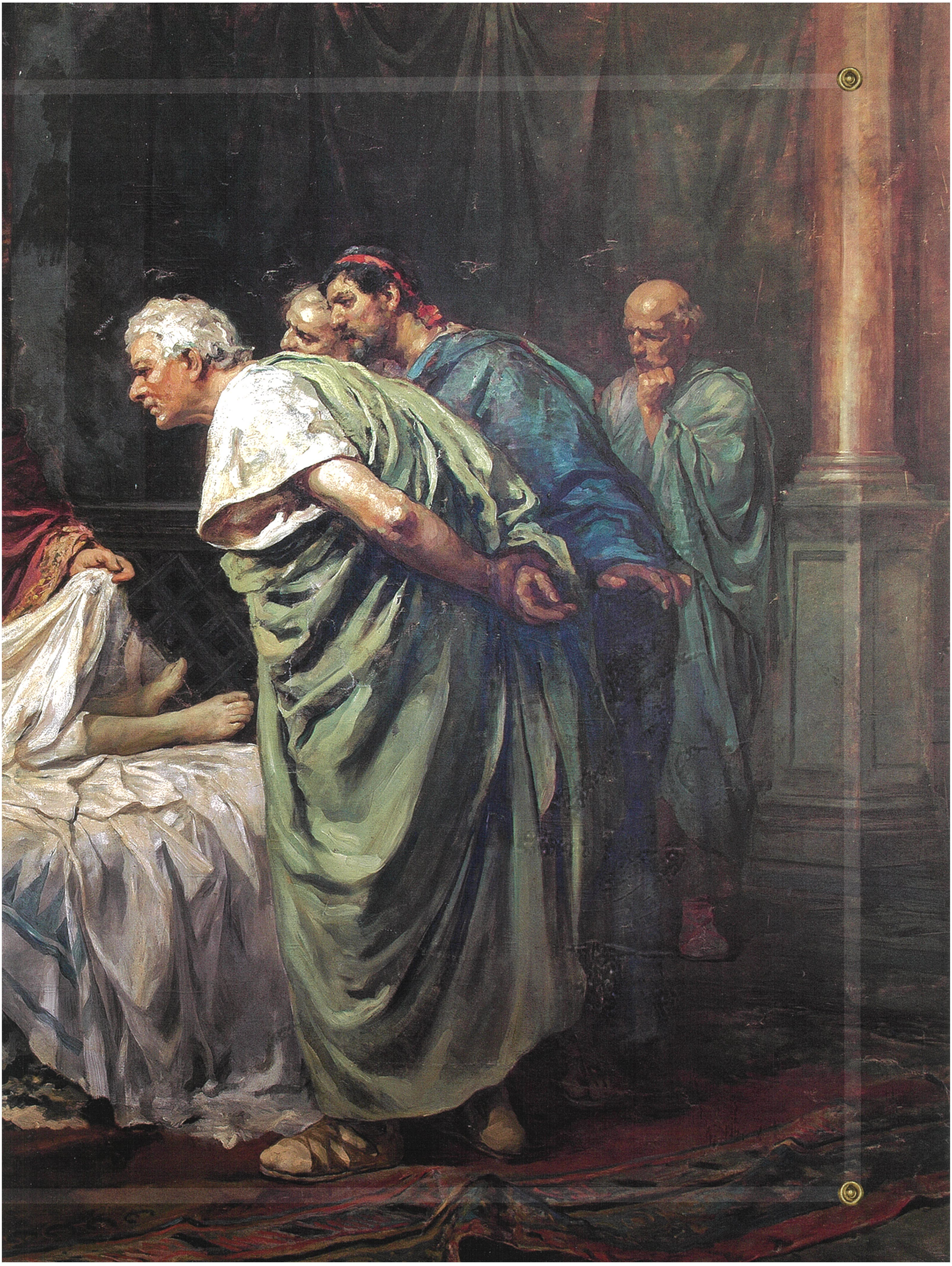
ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

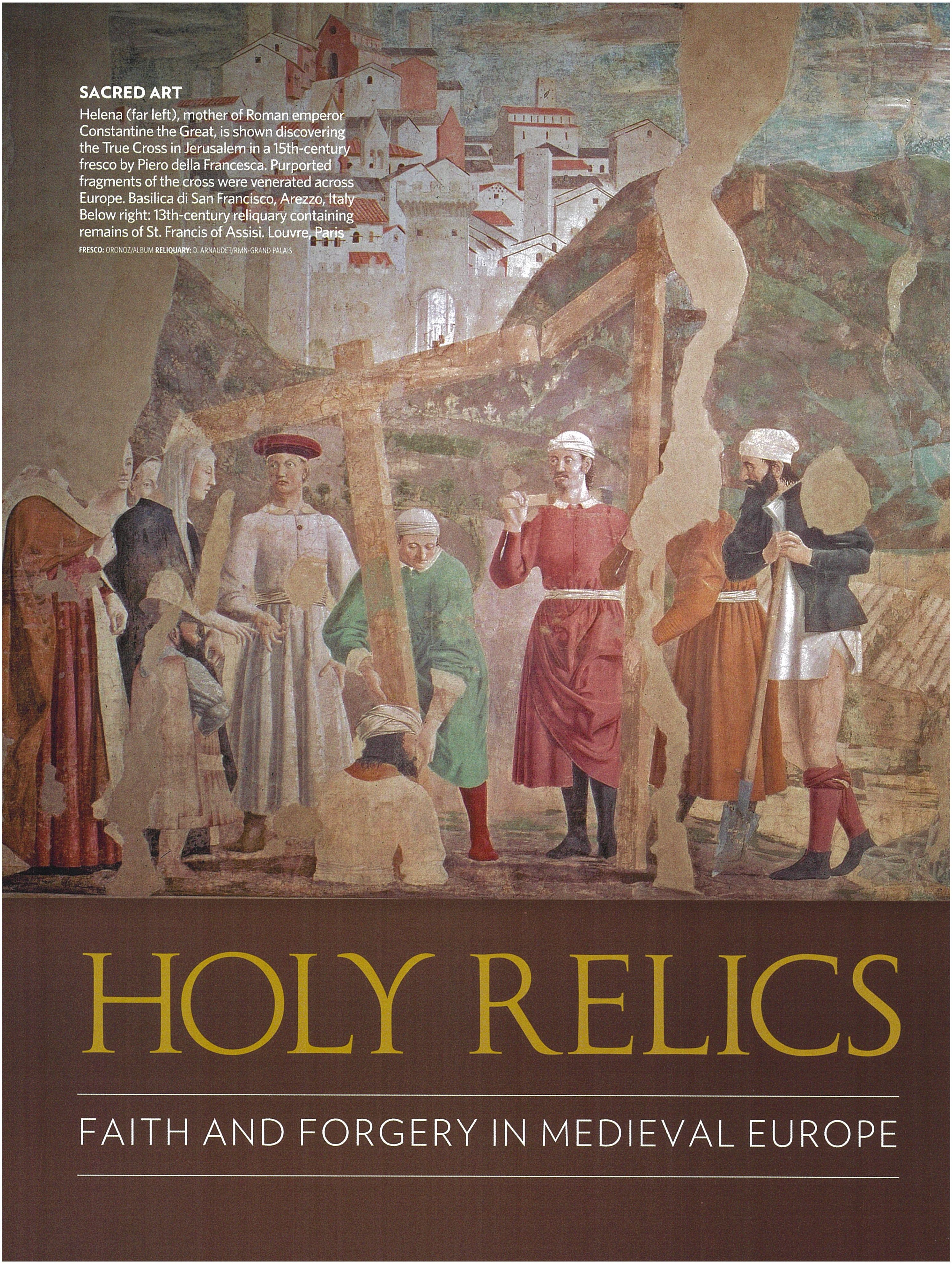


A SON'S GUILT

The moment when Nero examines the murdered body of his mother, Agrippina, is described in several ancient historians' accounts. In his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars,* the second-century Roman historian Suetonius related how Nero "rushed off to examine Agrippina's corpse, handling her limbs, and, between drinks to satisfy his thirst, discussing their good and bad points . . . He was never either then or afterward able to free his conscience from the guilt of this crime. He often admitted that he was hounded by his mother's ghost and that the Furies were pursuing him with whips and burning torches." Painting by Arturo Montero y Calvo, 1887. Prado Museum, Madrid

MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO, MADRID





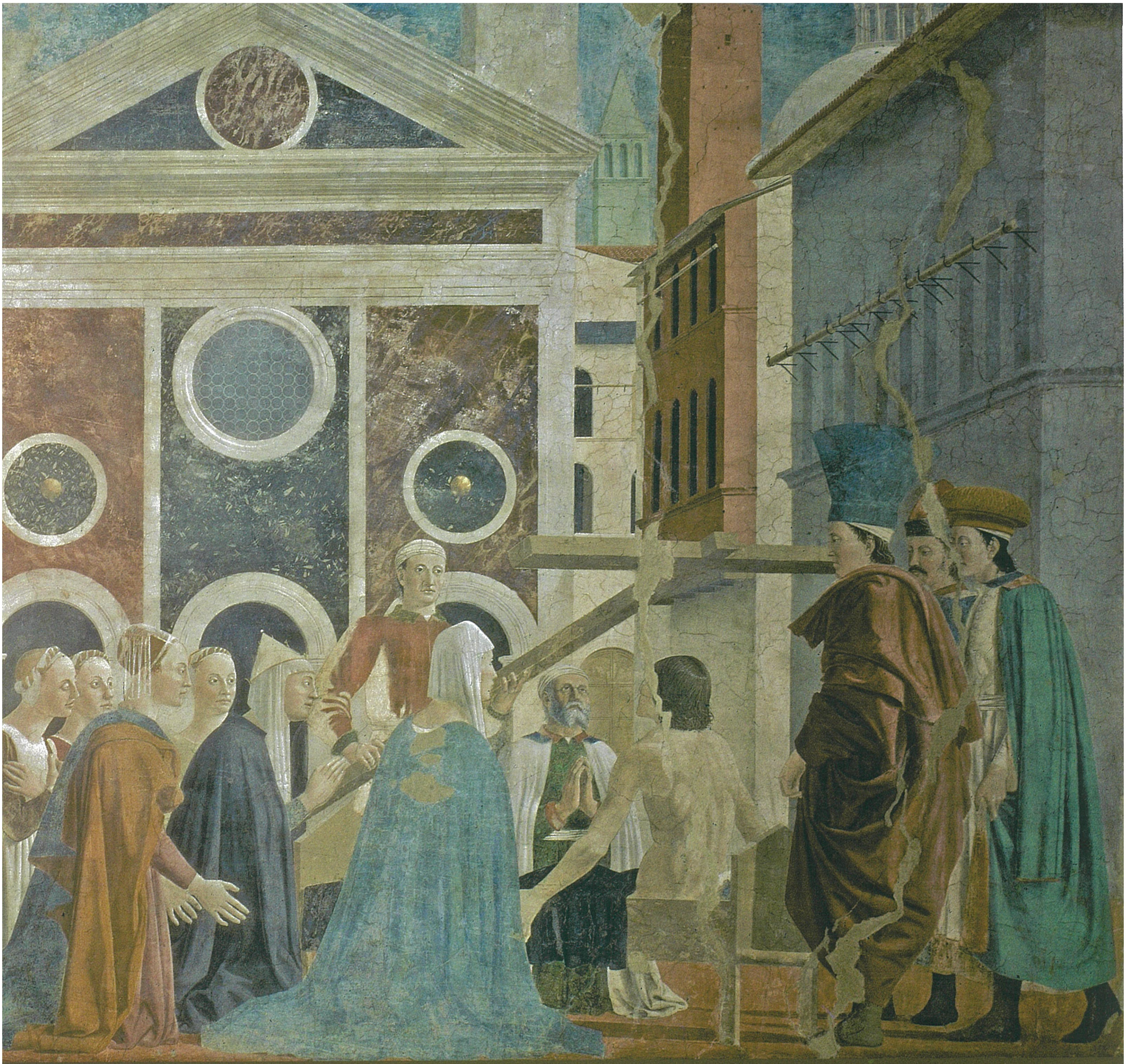
SACRED ART

Helena (far left), mother of Roman emperor Constantine the Great, is shown discovering the True Cross in Jerusalem in a 15th-century fresco by Piero della Francesca. Purported fragments of the cross were venerated across Europe. Basilica di San Francisco, Arezzo, Italy Below right: 13th-century reliquary containing remains of St. Francis of Assisi. Louvre, Paris

FRESCO: ORONOZ/ALBUM **RELIQUARY:** D. ARNAUDET/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

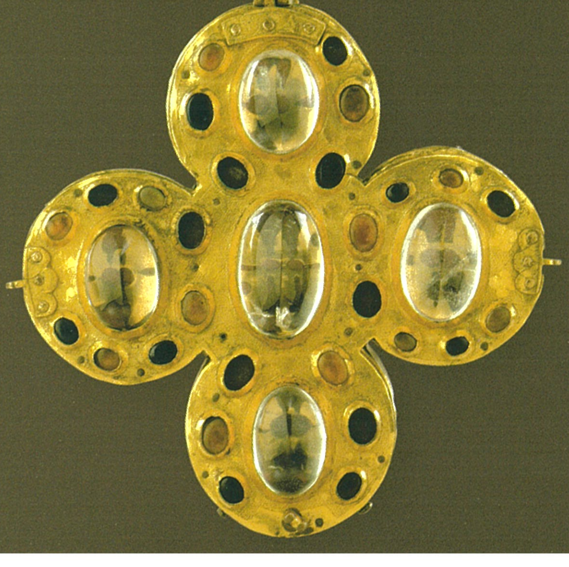
HOLY RELICS

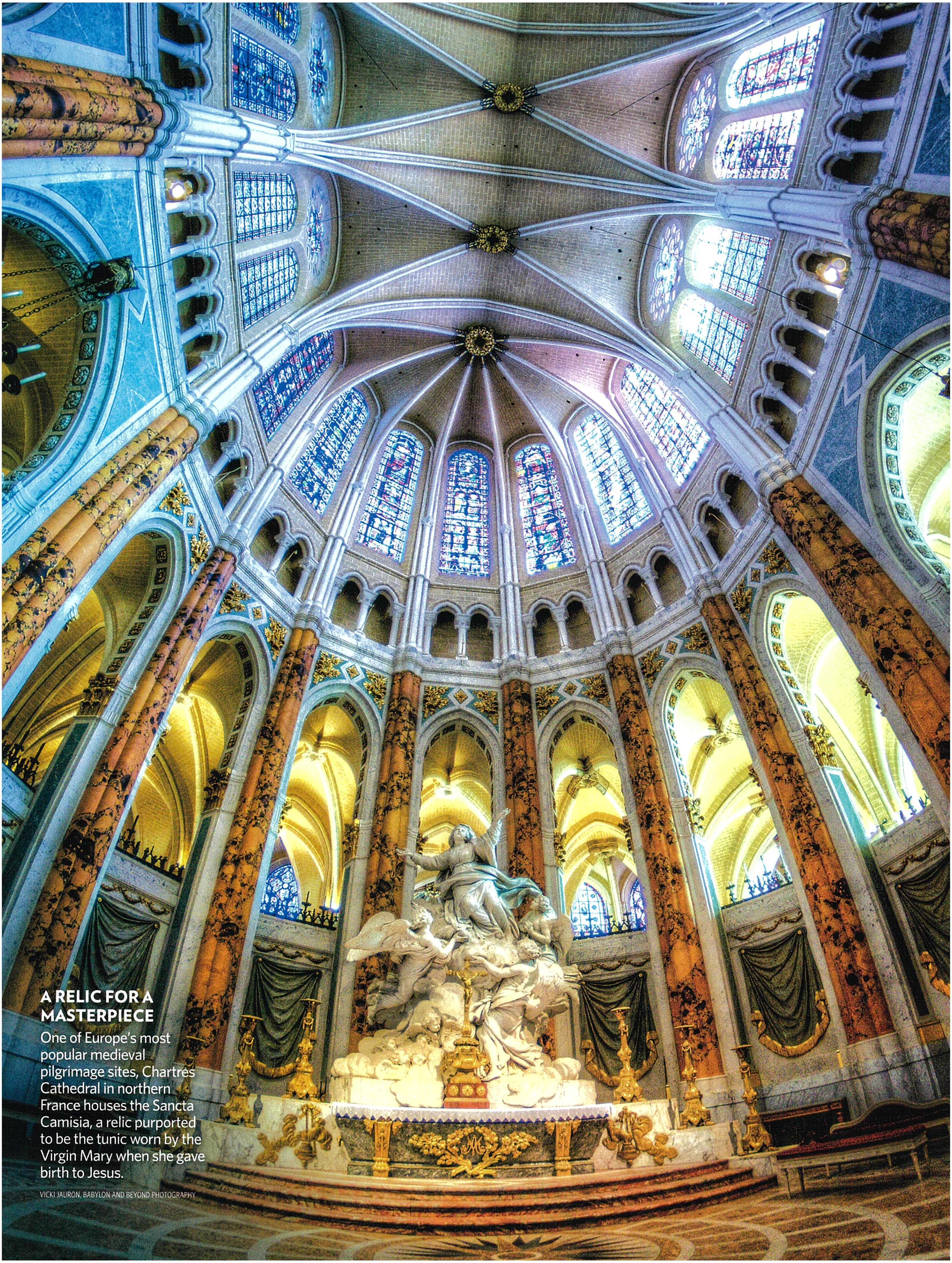
FAITH AND FORGERY IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE



Sacred objects associated with the Holy Family, the Apostles, and saints attracted not only faithful Christian pilgrims who sought to venerate them but also greedy con artists who sought wealth by stealing relics or selling outright fakes.

JESÚS CALLEJO





A RELIC FOR A MASTERPIECE

One of Europe's most popular medieval pilgrimage sites, Chartres Cathedral in northern France houses the Sancta Camisia, a relic purported to be the tunic worn by the Virgin Mary when she gave birth to Jesus.

VICKI JAURON, BABYLON AND BEYOND PHOTOGRAPHY

During the Middle Ages, objects and body parts associated with Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, and the saints played a central role in Christian life in Europe. Faithful pilgrims flocked to sites across the continent to venerate these relics, like the skull of St. Bridget in Sweden, the girdle of the Virgin Mary in the Netherlands, and Christ's blood in Belgium.

PRECIOUS CONTENTS

It is not clear what relic was contained in this silver gilt coffer with precious stones, but its lavish craftsmanship is typical of medieval reliquaries. It is held in the National Archaeological Museum, Cividale del Friuli, Italy, and dates from the late eighth century.

DEA/ALBUM

The top league of medieval relics were associated with Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Apostles, with lesser saints and martyrs ranked below. Pilgrims flocked to Rome, site of the burial of St. Paul and the Basilica of St. Peter, believed to contain the remains of the Apostle Peter, the first pope. Ranked after Rome in importance was the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, which tradition holds is built over the tomb containing the remains of the Apostle James.

From the 11th century, relics were in even greater demand, to furnish the churches along the pilgrim ways. It has often been argued that the cult of relics became a victim of its own success: Regarded as objects of superstition by reformers, these objects would feature in the disputes that led to Europe's violent split between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Bones of Contention

Veneration of relics can be traced back to the early Christian period, when the bodies of martyrs were often scattered by the Roman authorities after execution, in a bid to deter future Christian converts. Despite their efforts, the faithful did take pains to gather up the remains of martyrs, to dignify them with Christian burial. These remains were regarded with awe, illustrated by an account of the martyrdom of Bishop Polycarp at Smyrna (modern-day Turkey) around A.D. 155. After he was burned at the stake, his friends "took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than gold, and laid them in a suitable place . . . to gather . . . and celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom."

Catholic teaching holds that the relics of those who "live with Christ" are not to be worshipped, but venerated. Theologians say the objects themselves contain no holy properties or powers. It is, rather, that God is able to manifest works *through* the relics.

In the more practical context of day-to-day belief, however, relics were to become regarded as powerful objects. In A.D. 327 Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, identified important Christian sites in Jerusalem, including the location of Jesus' tomb. The tradition grew that Helena had also found fragments of the so-called True Cross on which Christ was crucified. Pieces of it were displayed in churches as early as 350. Sources at the time, such as Cyril,

BODIES AND SOULS

350
Fragments of the True Cross appear in churches. Relics will grow in popularity.

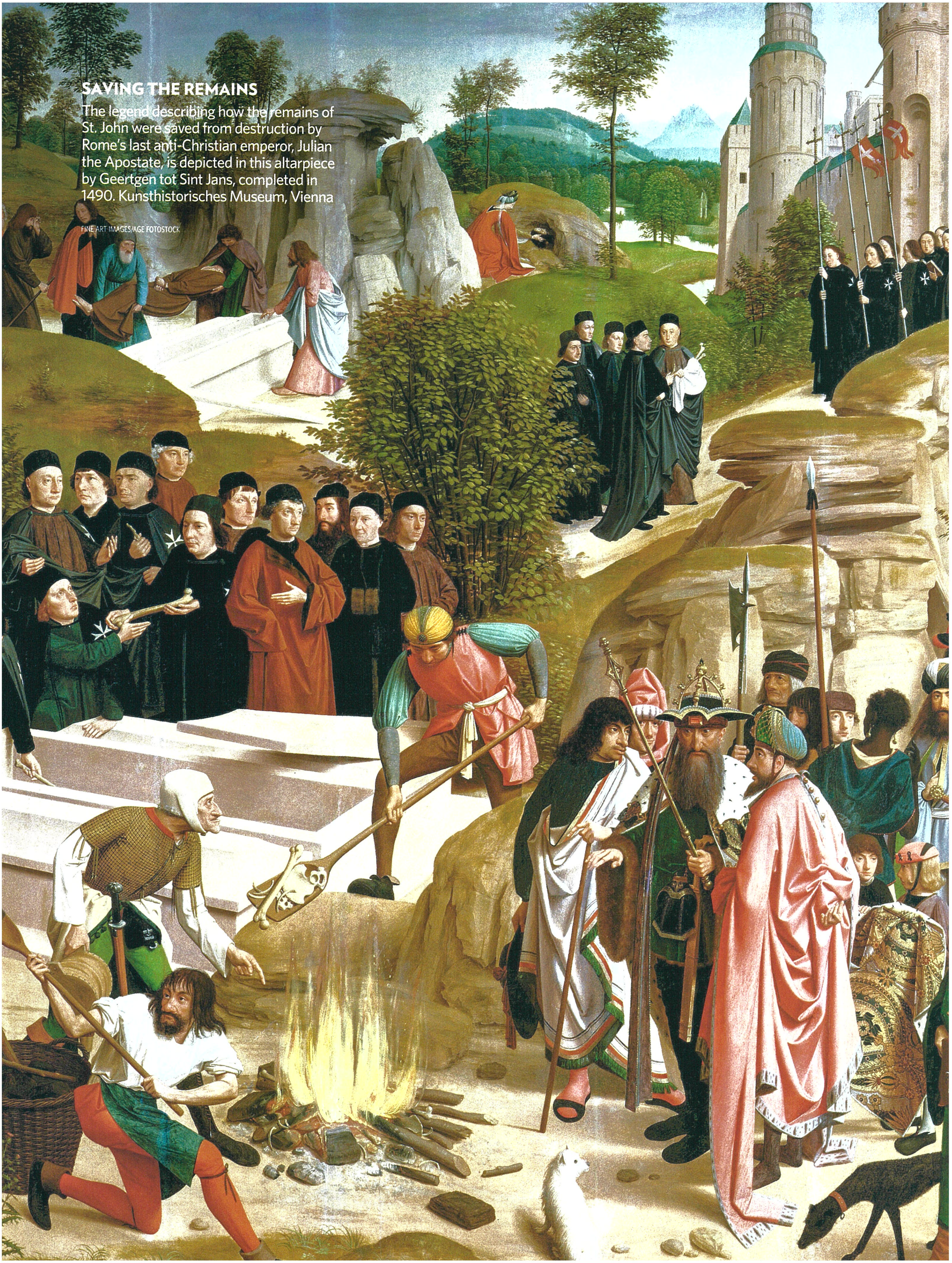
800s
In Spain, remains thought to be of St. James are found. Pilgrimage to Santiago will boom by the 1100s.

1215
The Fourth Lateran Council attempts to stamp out relic forgery—with limited success.

1543
John Calvin attacks the practice of relics. Later, Philip II of Spain will expand his collection.

RELIQUARY IN THE FORM OF AN ANGEL, 14TH CENTURY. LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS

M. BECK-COPPOLA/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

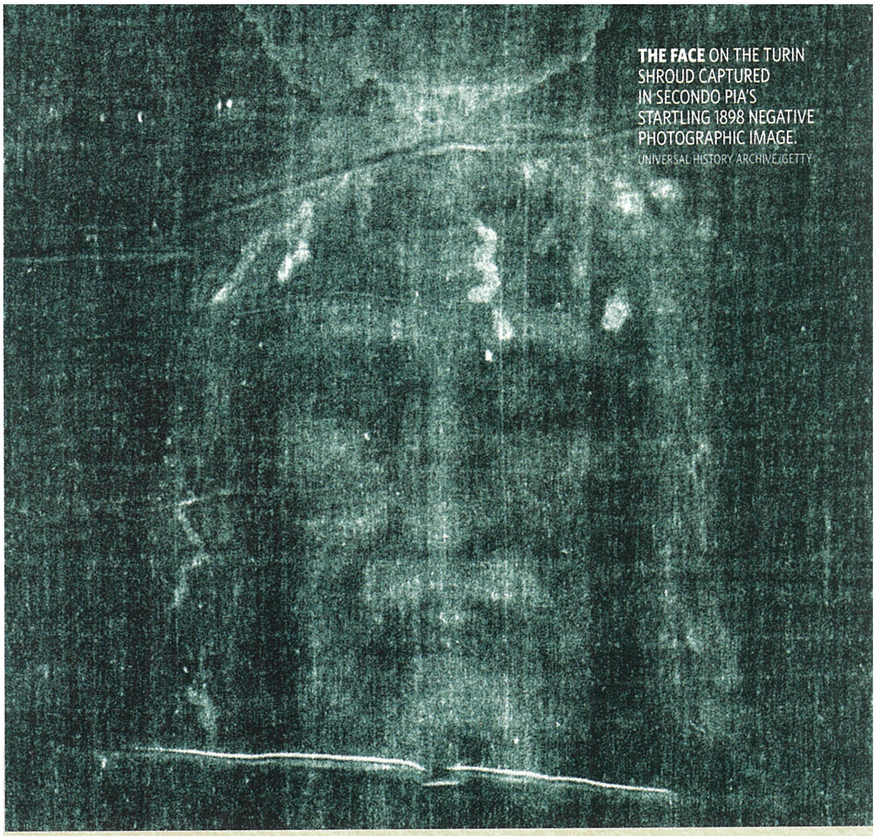


SAVING THE REMAINS

The legend describing how the remains of St. John were saved from destruction by Rome's last anti-Christian emperor, Julian the Apostate, is depicted in this altarpiece by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, completed in 1490. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

FINE ART IMAGES/AGE FOTOSTOCK

Bishop of Jerusalem, expressed surprise at the rapid dissemination of these objects.



THE FACE ON THE TURIN SHROUD CAPTURED IN SECONDO PIA'S STARTLING 1898 NEGATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE.

UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE/GETTY

THE SHROUD OF TURIN

HOUSED IN THE CATHEDRAL OF TURIN, ITALY, the cloth purported to be the shroud of Jesus electrified the world in 1898 when a photographer's negative revealed a serene face whom many believed to be Jesus Christ. Although radiocarbon analysis in 1988 concluded the relic is a medieval forgery, mystery still surrounds it: Scientific analysis has not established how such a detailed image could have been imprinted.

The Relic Racket

The spread of relics across Europe intensified as Christianity spread and the numbers of the faithful grew. In the Middle Ages the faithful would embark on pilgrimages to European cities to venerate relics. Traveling to the Holy Land itself was far too expensive a journey for most Europeans, but visiting sites closer to home was more within their reach.

The Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela, where the remains of St. James are believed to be interred, became one of Europe's first major pilgrimage sites starting in the 10th century. The major pathways to the city became pilgrimage routes, and towns along the way built their own sacred sites and churches.

Such buildings also acquired relics to proclaim their splendor and attract the faithful. The great church at Conques in France housed the remains of the Roman girl martyr St. Foy, while the Basilica of St. Sernin in Toulouse held the remains of its eponymous, martyred saint, who tradition holds was dragged to his death behind a bull.

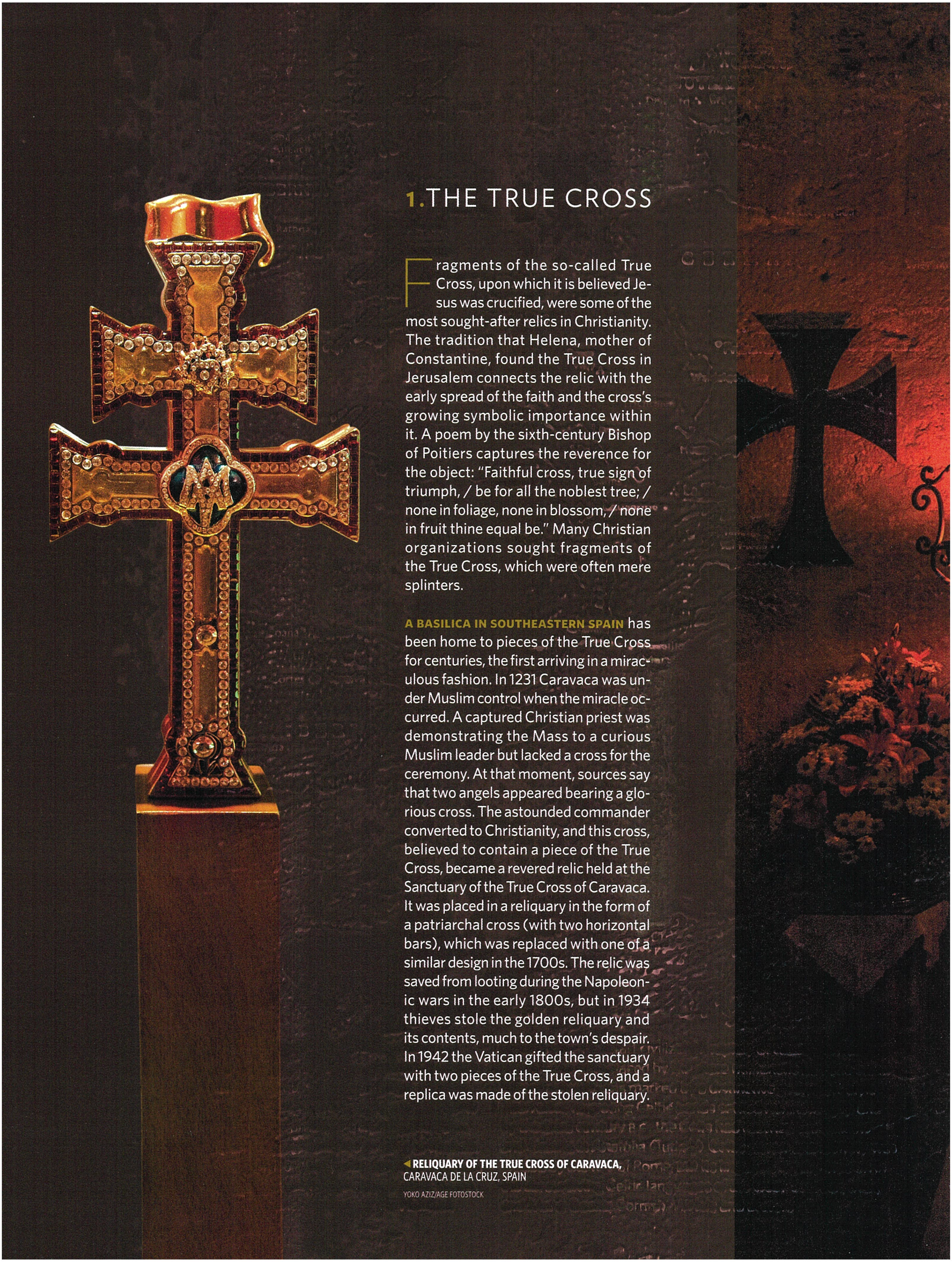
A market for relics developed, and institutions competed for them. Helping feed demand was the idea of the "associated" relic: By the early Middle Ages, the practice developed of leaving objects, such as cloths or silks, near a relic so they would "absorb" its qualities and then be sent to religious institutions as an object of veneration.

Forgeries also flooded this market. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council acknowledged that "Christianity is disparaged because certain people put saints' relics up for sale and display them indiscriminately." The princes of the church ruled to clamp down on the sale of known relics, and only to consider claims for newly found relics after a vetting procedure.

Fraud, however, continued. Far-fetched claims became the butt of jokes, even among Catholics. The early 16th-century Spanish humanist Alfonso del Valdés noted wryly: "I have seen Our Lord's foreskin at Rome, at Burgos [Spain], and likewise at the church of Our Lady at Antwerp." In Valdés' lifetime, the relic question would feed into the Lutheran revolution in 1517, and typify for many the excess materiality and superstition of Roman Catholicism. In his 1543 "Treatise on Relics," John Calvin railed at how believers had accepted "any rubbish presented to them" even if they were "evidently the bones of an ass or dog."

Modern science has also continued to cast a skeptical eye on the authenticity of specific relics. Radiocarbon dating of the skull of St. Bridget at Vadstena in Sweden has shown that it predates the birth of the saint, and similar tests carried out on the Shroud of Turin reveal it is made of cloth from the medieval period, much too late to have covered the body of Jesus. Even so, for many modern pilgrims, the tradition of veneration trumps science. Many still journey to see these objects, which retain their potent air of mystery and holiness. ■

AUTHOR **JESÚS CALLEJO** WRITES ON THE ROLE OF BELIEF IN MEDIEVAL AND MODERN HISTORY, ESPECIALLY CHRISTIANITY AND EUROPEAN FOLKLORE.



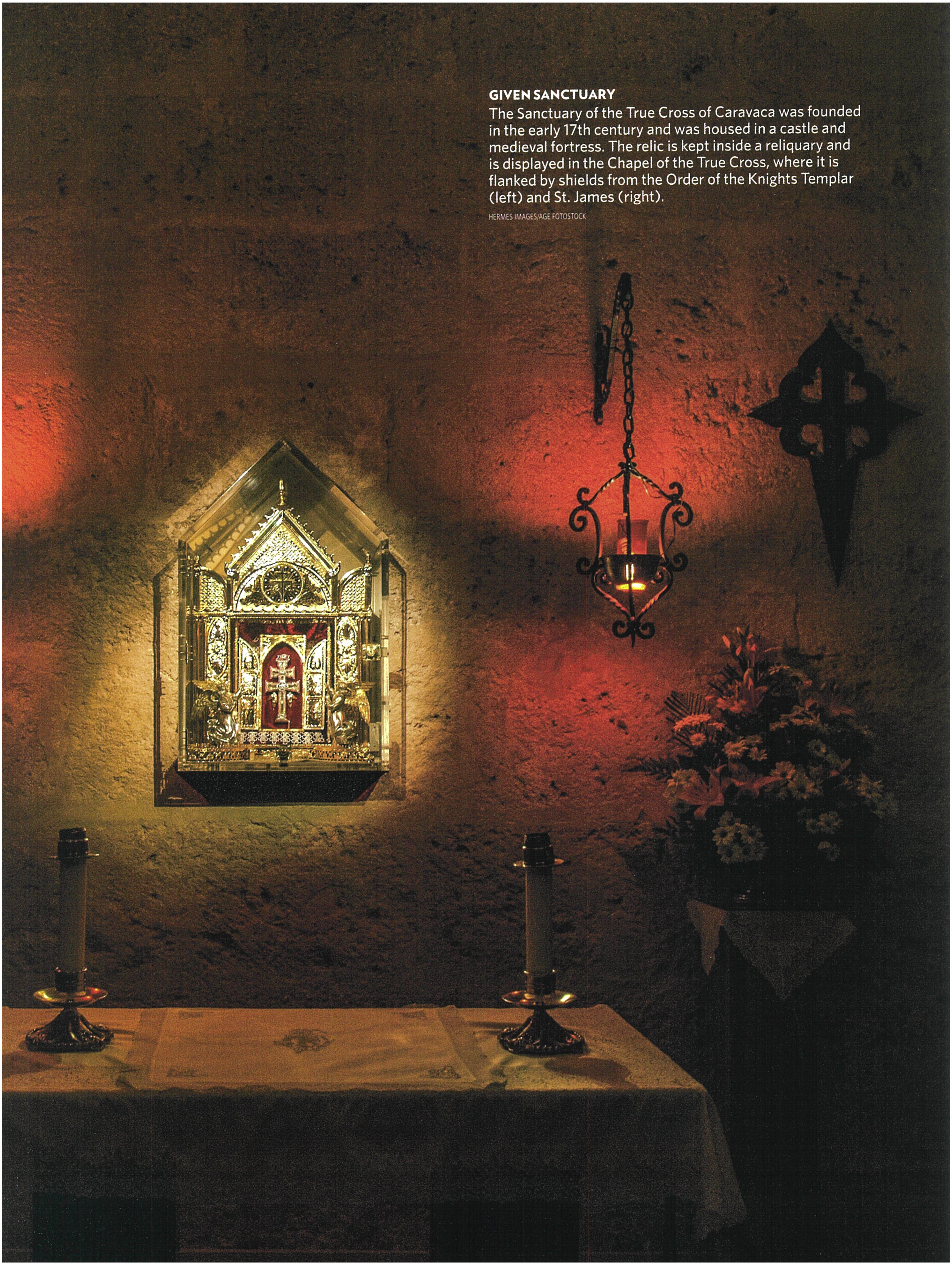
1. THE TRUE CROSS

Fragments of the so-called True Cross, upon which it is believed Jesus was crucified, were some of the most sought-after relics in Christianity. The tradition that Helena, mother of Constantine, found the True Cross in Jerusalem connects the relic with the early spread of the faith and the cross's growing symbolic importance within it. A poem by the sixth-century Bishop of Poitiers captures the reverence for the object: "Faithful cross, true sign of triumph, / be for all the noblest tree; / none in foliage, none in blossom, / none in fruit thine equal be." Many Christian organizations sought fragments of the True Cross, which were often mere splinters.

A BASILICA IN SOUTHEASTERN SPAIN has been home to pieces of the True Cross for centuries, the first arriving in a miraculous fashion. In 1231 Caravaca was under Muslim control when the miracle occurred. A captured Christian priest was demonstrating the Mass to a curious Muslim leader but lacked a cross for the ceremony. At that moment, sources say that two angels appeared bearing a glorious cross. The astounded commander converted to Christianity, and this cross, believed to contain a piece of the True Cross, became a revered relic held at the Sanctuary of the True Cross of Caravaca. It was placed in a reliquary in the form of a patriarchal cross (with two horizontal bars), which was replaced with one of a similar design in the 1700s. The relic was saved from looting during the Napoleonic wars in the early 1800s, but in 1934 thieves stole the golden reliquary and its contents, much to the town's despair. In 1942 the Vatican gifted the sanctuary with two pieces of the True Cross, and a replica was made of the stolen reliquary.

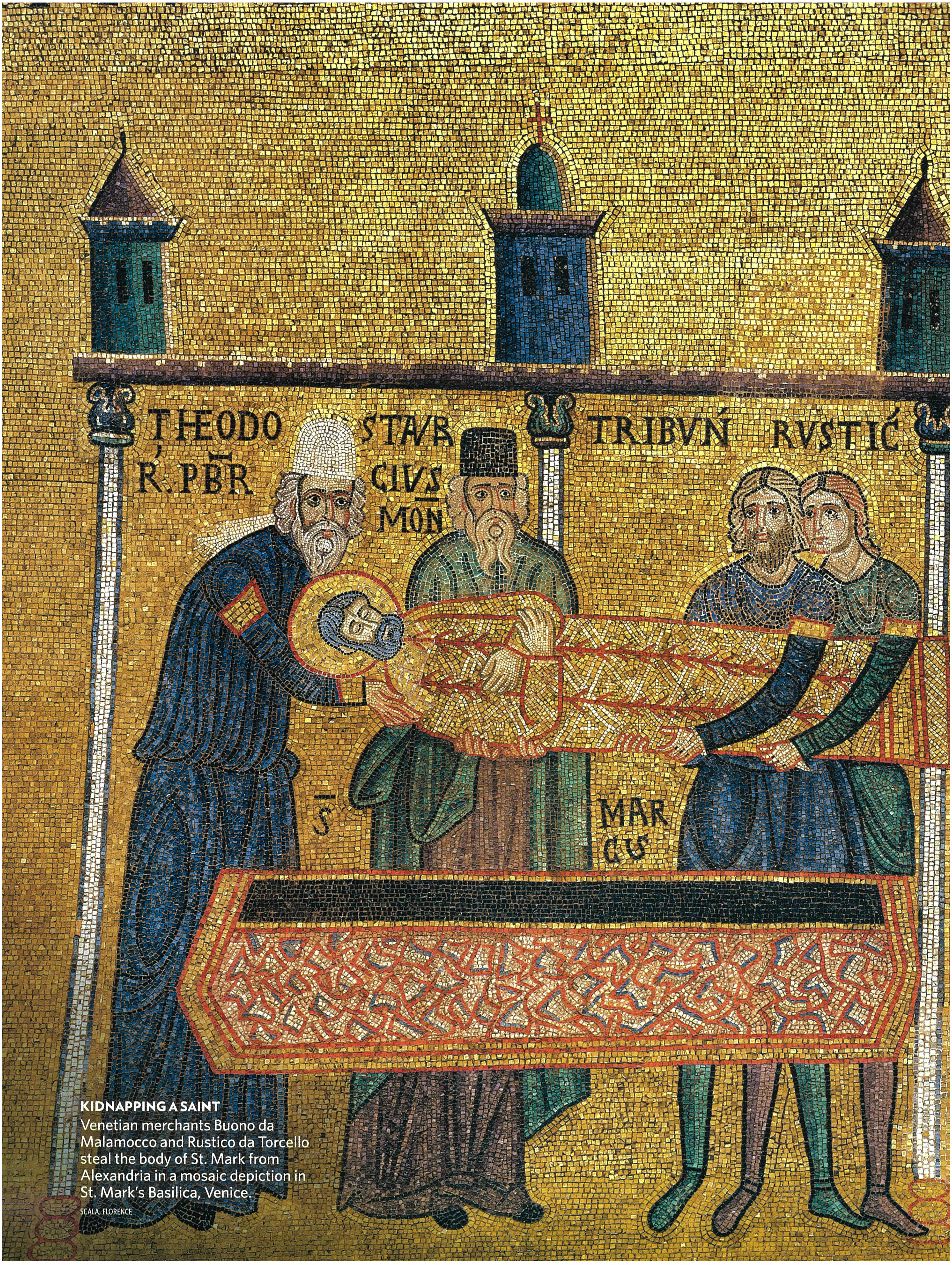
◀ **RELIQUARY OF THE TRUE CROSS OF CARAVACA,**
CARAVACA DE LA CRUZ, SPAIN

YOKO AZIZ/AGE FOTOSTOCK



GIVEN SANCTUARY
The Sanctuary of the True Cross of Caravaca was founded in the early 17th century and was housed in a castle and medieval fortress. The relic is kept inside a reliquary and is displayed in the Chapel of the True Cross, where it is flanked by shields from the Order of the Knights Templar (left) and St. James (right).

HERMES IMAGES/AGE FOTOSTOCK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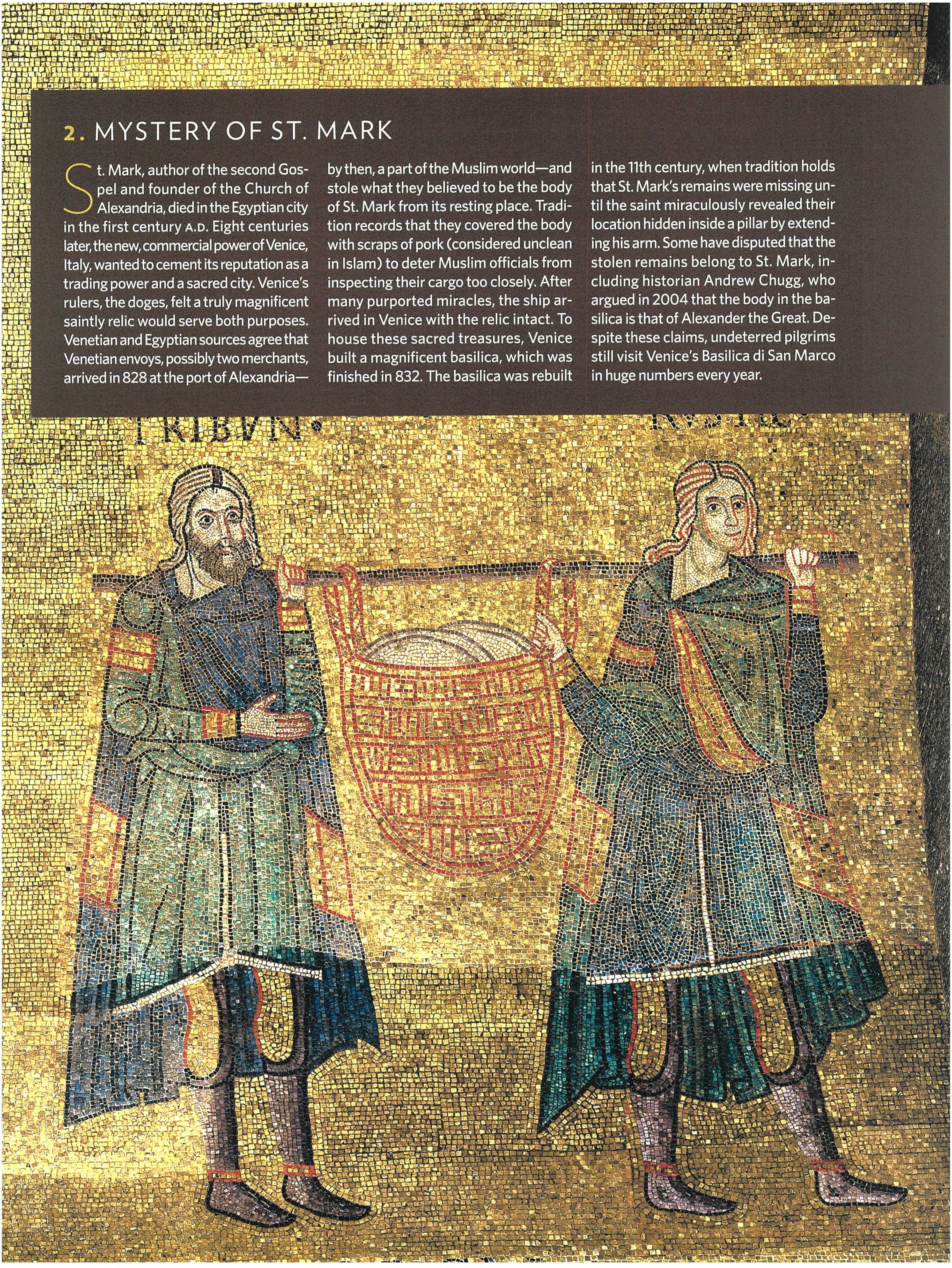
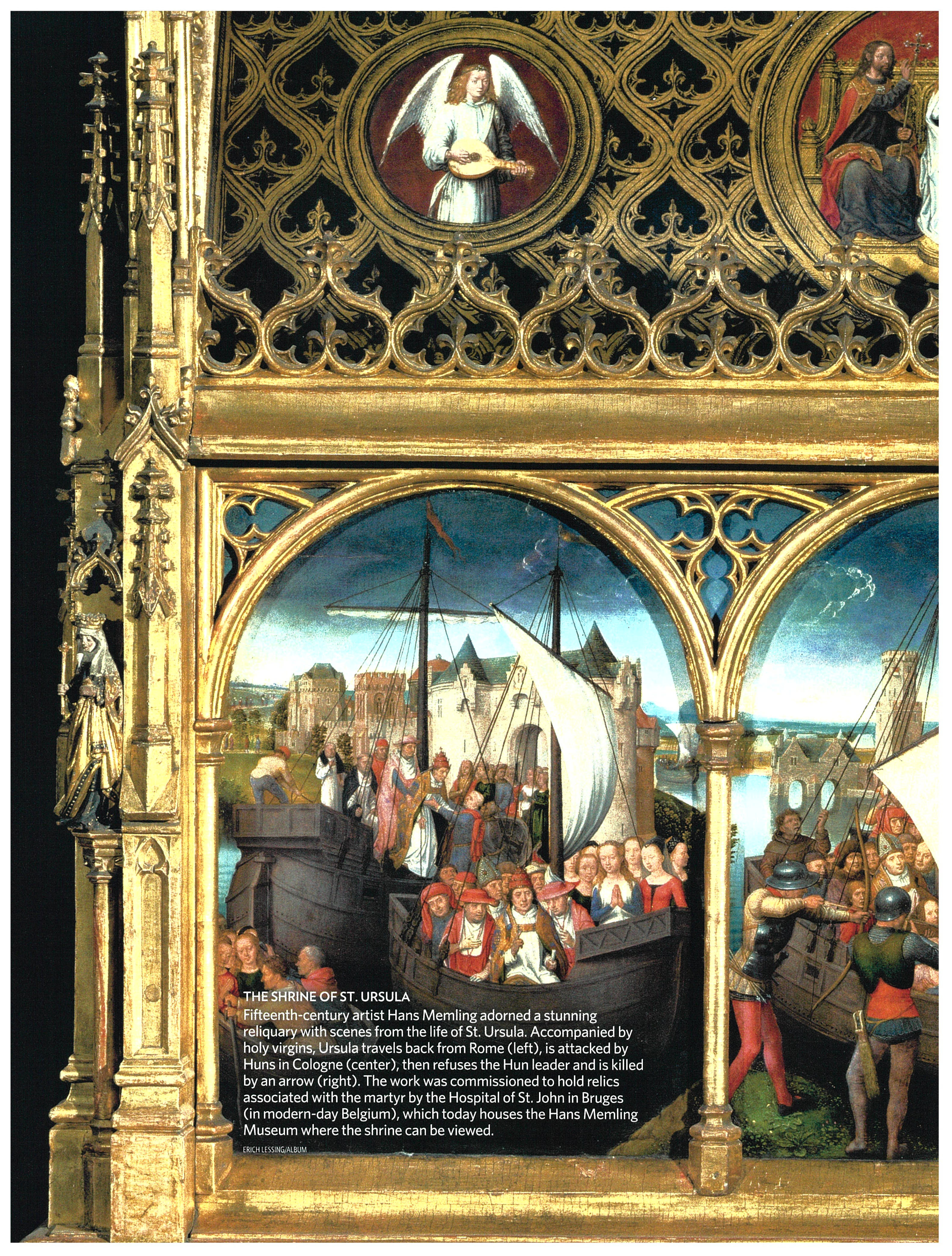
KIDNAPPING A SAINT
Venetian merchants Buono da Malamocco and Rustico da Torcello steal the body of St. Mark from Alexandria in a mosaic depiction in St. Mark's Basilica, Venice.

SCALA, FLORENCE

2. MYSTERY OF ST. MARK

St. Mark, author of the second Gospel and founder of the Church of Alexandria, died in the Egyptian city in the first century A.D. Eight centuries later, the new, commercial power of Venice, Italy, wanted to cement its reputation as a trading power and a sacred city. Venice's rulers, the doges, felt a truly magnificent saintly relic would serve both purposes. Venetian and Egyptian sources agree that Venetian envoys, possibly two merchants, arrived in 828 at the port of Alexandria—by then, a part of the Muslim world—and stole what they believed to be the body of St. Mark from its resting place. Tradition records that they covered the body with scraps of pork (considered unclean in Islam) to deter Muslim officials from inspecting their cargo too closely. After many purported miracles, the ship arrived in Venice with the relic intact. To house these sacred treasures, Venice built a magnificent basilica, which was finished in 832. The basilica was rebuilt in the 11th century, when tradition holds that St. Mark's remains were missing until the saint miraculously revealed their location hidden inside a pillar by extending his arm. Some have disputed that the stolen remains belong to St. Mark, including historian Andrew Chugg, who argued in 2004 that the body in the basilica is that of Alexander the Great. Despite these claims, undeterred pilgrims still visit Venice's Basilica di San Marco in huge numbers every year.





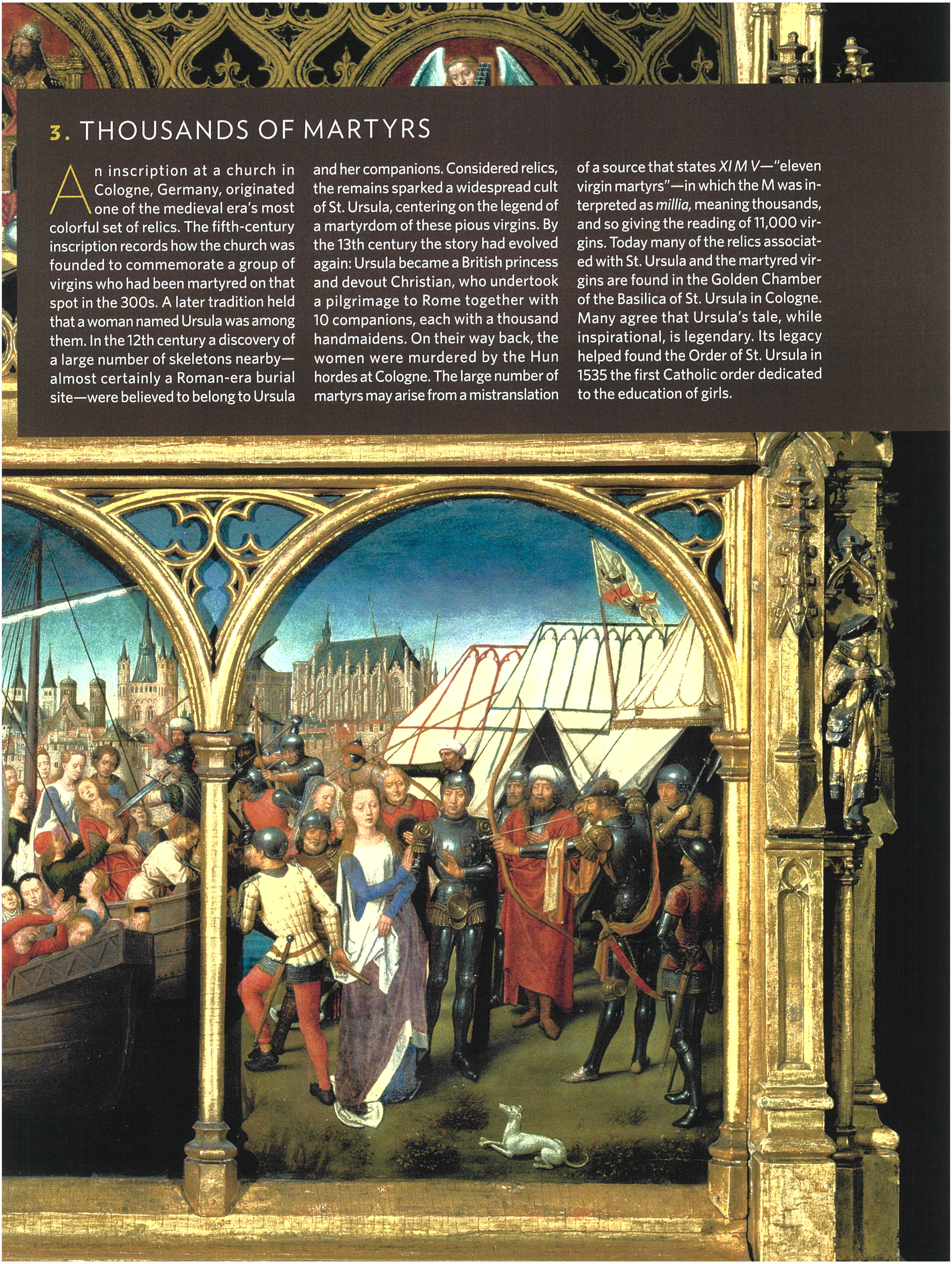
THE SHRINE OF ST. URSULA

Fifteenth-century artist Hans Memling adorned a stunning reliquary with scenes from the life of St. Ursula. Accompanied by holy virgins, Ursula travels back from Rome (left), is attacked by Huns in Cologne (center), then refuses the Hun leader and is killed by an arrow (right). The work was commissioned to hold relics associated with the martyr by the Hospital of St. John in Bruges (in modern-day Belgium), which today houses the Hans Memling Museum where the shrine can be viewed.

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

3. THOUSANDS OF MARTYRS

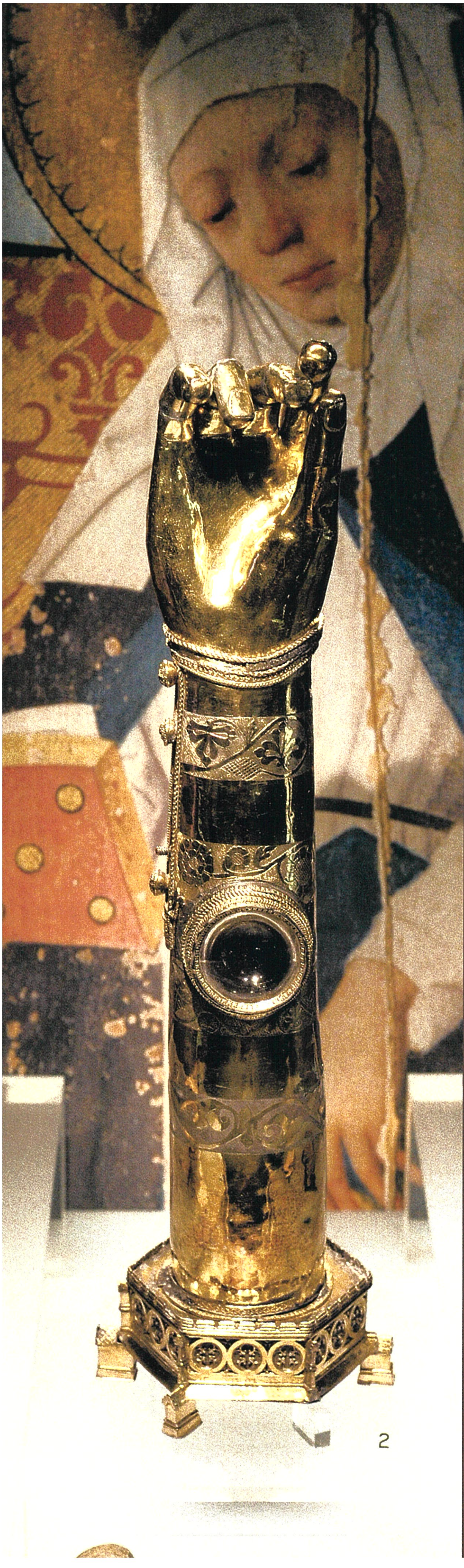
An inscription at a church in Cologne, Germany, originated one of the medieval era's most colorful set of relics. The fifth-century inscription records how the church was founded to commemorate a group of virgins who had been martyred on that spot in the 300s. A later tradition held that a woman named Ursula was among them. In the 12th century a discovery of a large number of skeletons nearby—almost certainly a Roman-era burial site—were believed to belong to Ursula and her companions. Considered relics, the remains sparked a widespread cult of St. Ursula, centering on the legend of a martyrdom of these pious virgins. By the 13th century the story had evolved again: Ursula became a British princess and devout Christian, who undertook a pilgrimage to Rome together with 10 companions, each with a thousand handmaidens. On their way back, the women were murdered by the Hun hordes at Cologne. The large number of martyrs may arise from a mistranslation of a source that states *XI M V*—"eleven virgin martyrs"—in which the M was interpreted as *millia*, meaning thousands, and so giving the reading of 11,000 virgins. Today many of the relics associated with St. Ursula and the martyred virgins are found in the Golden Chamber of the Basilica of St. Ursula in Cologne. Many agree that Ursula's tale, while inspirational, is legendary. Its legacy helped found the Order of St. Ursula in 1535 the first Catholic order dedicated to the education of girls.



4. STUDYING SACRED RELICS

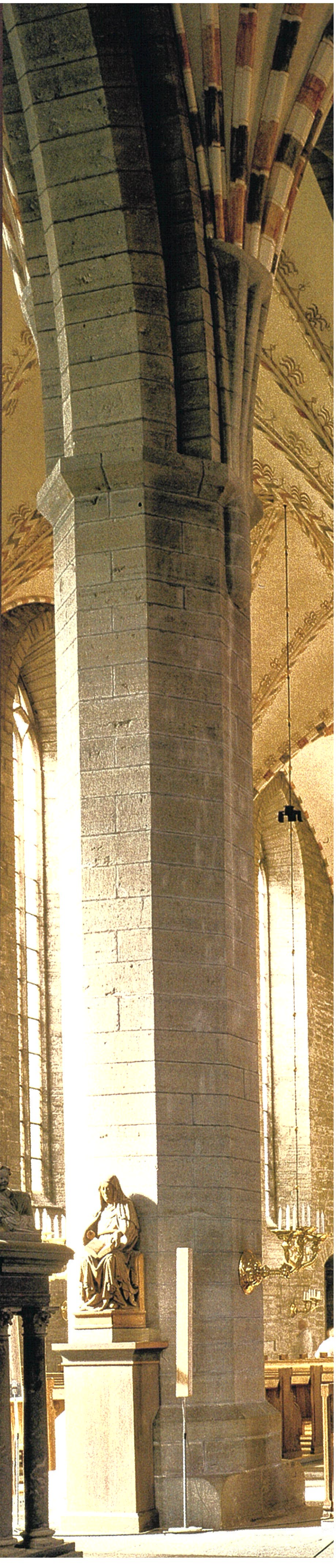
One of the patron saints of Europe, St. Bridget of Sweden was born in Uppsala in around 1303. Throughout her life, Bridget was said to have had many intense religious experiences. She was critical of excess pomp in the church, and in 1346 founded a religious order, the Order of the Most Holy Savior, at Vadstena Abbey. After making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she died in Rome in 1373. Her daughter, Catherine, was made abbess of Bridget's order. Bridget was proclaimed a saint in 1391, and her remains were returned to Sweden to be interred. After their initial burial, they were disinterred and distributed to various sites. A reliquary containing what is purported to be her arm is now in a Stockholm museum. Two skulls, believed to be those of Bridget and Catherine, were placed in a relic shrine at Vadstena Abbey. Even after Sweden adopted the Protestant faith, Bridget was still venerated by Lutherans as well as Catholics.

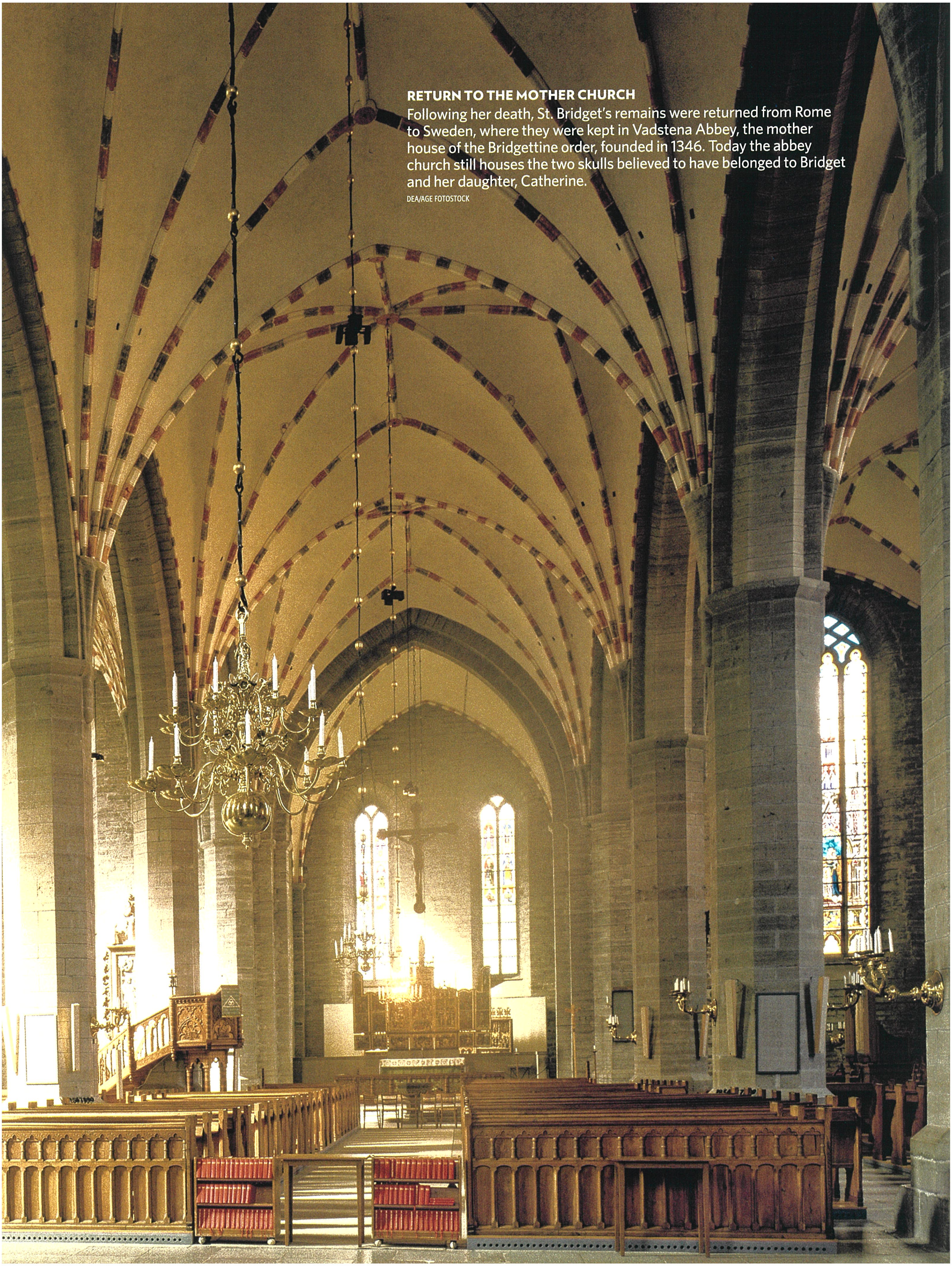
IN 2010 the Department of Genetics and Pathology at Uppsala University carried out a study of the skulls at the abbey. Forensic anthropological analysis of the relic believed to be St. Bridget's belonged to a woman who lived between 1215 and 1270, before Bridget's birth. Mitochondrial DNA analysis of both skulls showed no family relationship between the two, so their owners could not have been mother and daughter as believed. Although the scientific discovery undermines the narrative behind this 600-year-old sacred tradition, it has not deterred pilgrims from visiting Vadstena and venerating the relics.



◄ **THE ARM OF ST. BRIDGET** IS BELIEVED TO BE CONTAINED IN THIS SILVER RELIQUARY, ONCE HOUSED IN LINKÖPING CATHEDRAL. IT IS NOW ON DISPLAY AT THE SWEDISH HISTORY MUSEUM, STOCKHOLM.

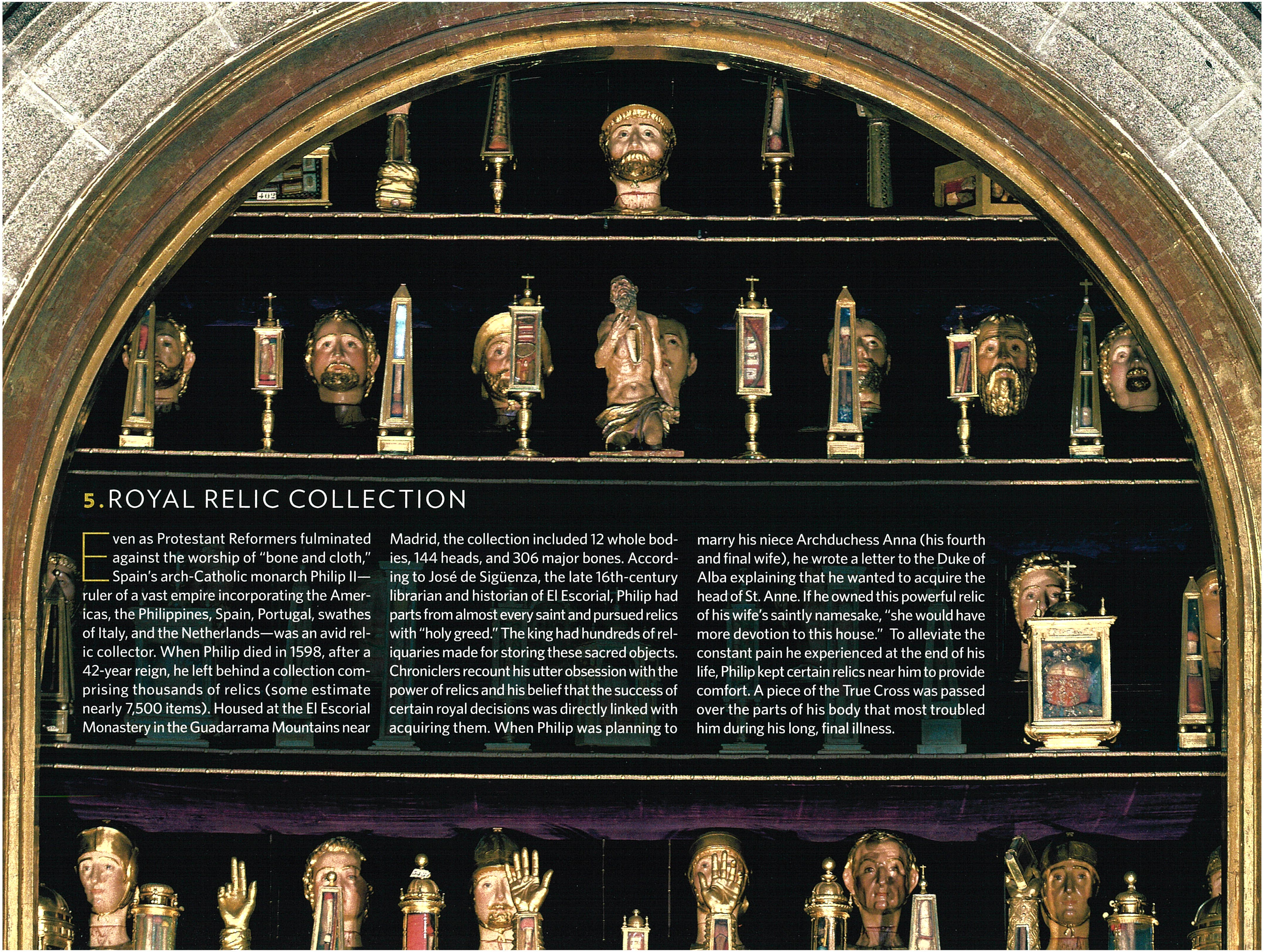
PRISMA/ALBUM





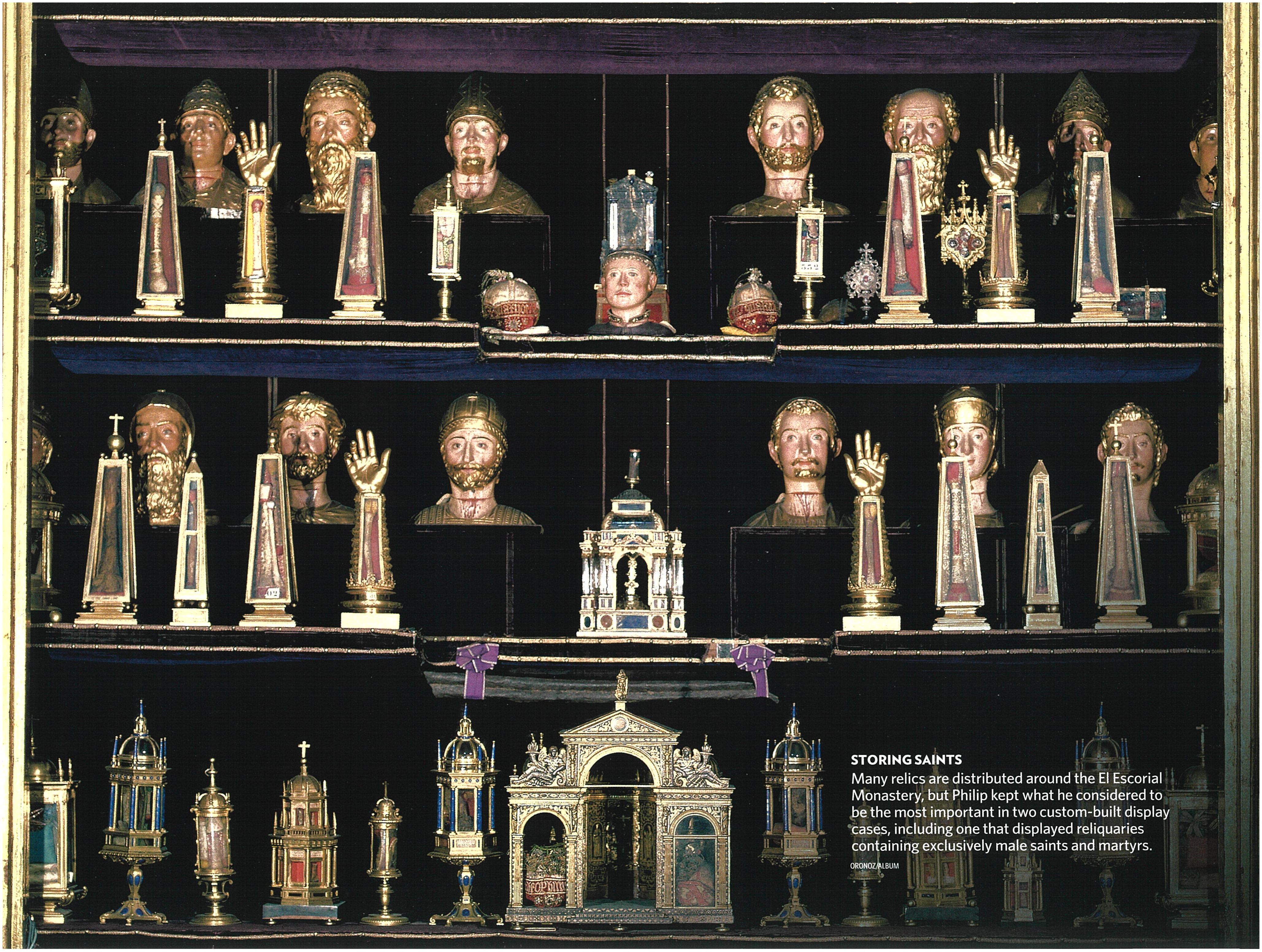
RETURN TO THE MOTHER CHURCH
Following her death, St. Bridget's remains were returned from Rome to Sweden, where they were kept in Vadstena Abbey, the mother house of the Bridgettine order, founded in 1346. Today the abbey church still houses the two skulls believed to have belonged to Bridget and her daughter, Catherine.

DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK



5. ROYAL RELIC COLLECTION

Even as Protestant Reformers fulminated against the worship of "bone and cloth," Spain's arch-Catholic monarch Philip II—ruler of a vast empire incorporating the Americas, the Philippines, Spain, Portugal, swathes of Italy, and the Netherlands—was an avid relic collector. When Philip died in 1598, after a 42-year reign, he left behind a collection comprising thousands of relics (some estimate nearly 7,500 items). Housed at the El Escorial Monastery in the Guadarrama Mountains near Madrid, the collection included 12 whole bodies, 144 heads, and 306 major bones. According to José de Sigüenza, the late 16th-century librarian and historian of El Escorial, Philip had parts from almost every saint and pursued relics with "holy greed." The king had hundreds of reliquaries made for storing these sacred objects. Chroniclers recount his utter obsession with the power of relics and his belief that the success of certain royal decisions was directly linked with acquiring them. When Philip was planning to marry his niece Archduchess Anna (his fourth and final wife), he wrote a letter to the Duke of Alba explaining that he wanted to acquire the head of St. Anne. If he owned this powerful relic of his wife's saintly namesake, "she would have more devotion to this house." To alleviate the constant pain he experienced at the end of his life, Philip kept certain relics near him to provide comfort. A piece of the True Cross was passed over the parts of his body that most troubled him during his long, final illness.



STORING SAINTS

Many relics are distributed around the El Escorial Monastery, but Philip kept what he considered to be the most important in two custom-built display cases, including one that displayed reliquaries containing exclusively male saints and martyrs.

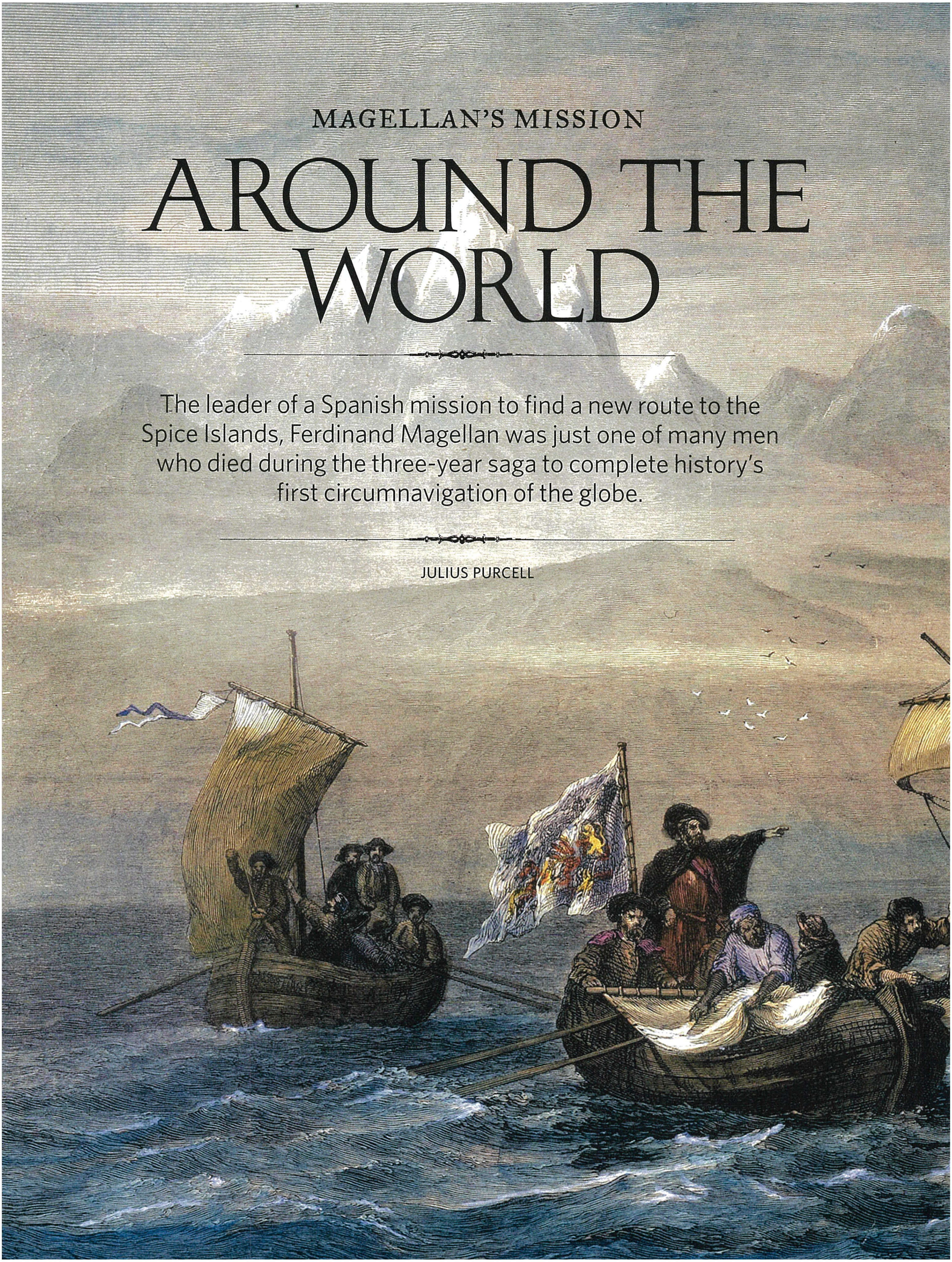
ORONOZ/ALBUM

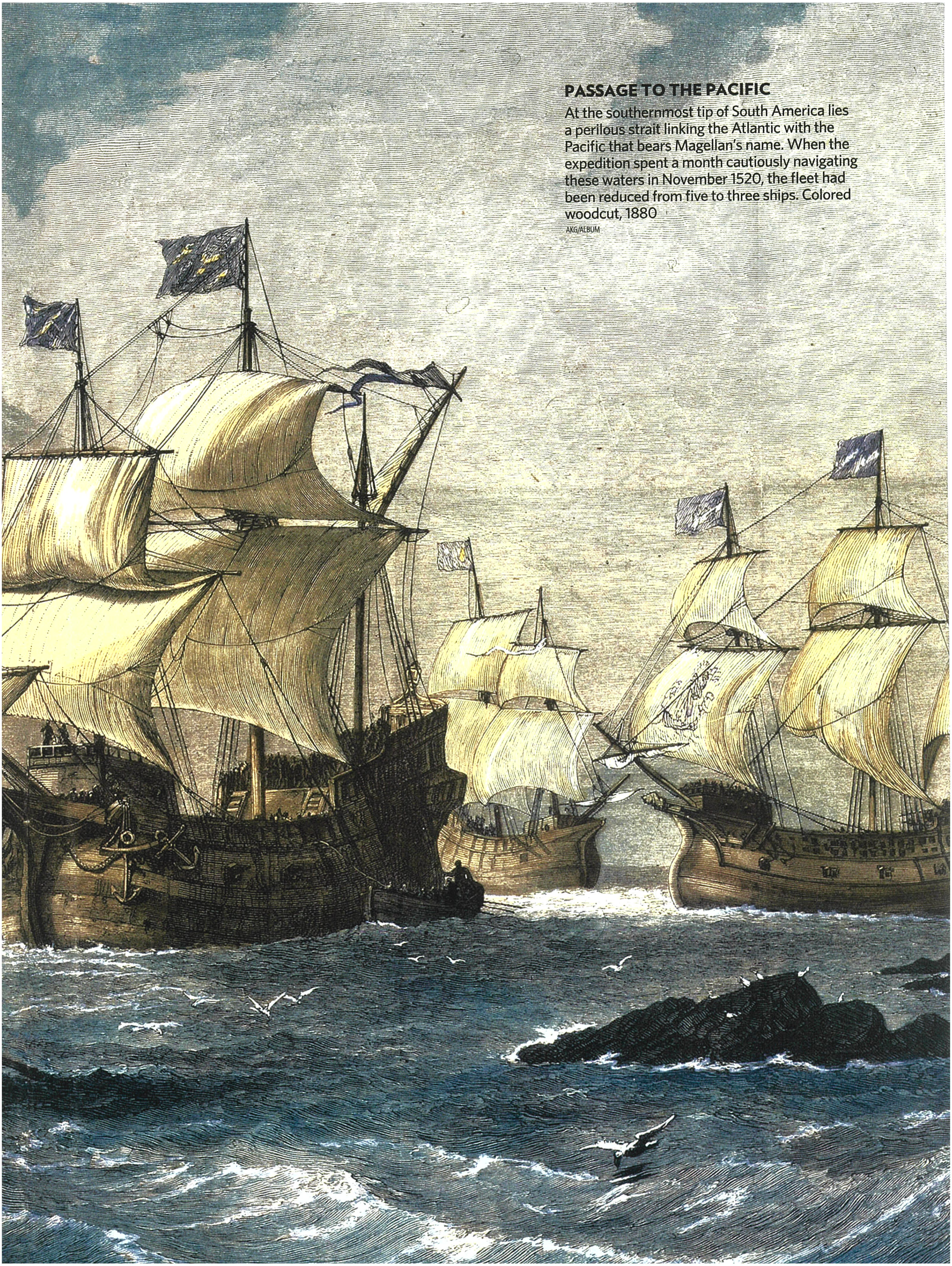
MAGELLAN'S MISSION

AROUND THE WORLD

The leader of a Spanish mission to find a new route to the Spice Islands, Ferdinand Magellan was just one of many men who died during the three-year saga to complete history's first circumnavigation of the globe.

JULIUS PURCELL

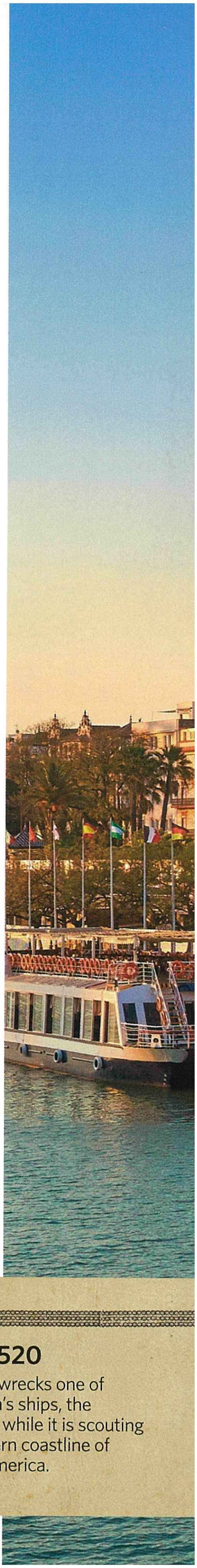




PASSAGE TO THE PACIFIC

At the southernmost tip of South America lies a perilous strait linking the Atlantic with the Pacific that bears Magellan's name. When the expedition spent a month cautiously navigating these waters in November 1520, the fleet had been reduced from five to three ships. Colored woodcut, 1880

AKG/ALBUM



As it moored under Seville's imposing skyline on September 8, 1522, the *Victoria* may not have stood out as anything exceptional among the bustle of Spanish ships arriving from the Americas. When 18 men stepped off board, "leaner than old, worn-out nags," as one of them later recalled, they stepped into the history books as the first people to have sailed entirely around the world.

It had been a brutal voyage, led by the brilliant, if ruthless, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan. When they set out from Seville, three years before in summer 1519, they were a crew of 240 manning five ships. A series of blows—including starvation, illness, mutiny, executions, and the death of their leader—decimated their numbers and their fleet before returning to Spain.

These men had, however, completed their global journey, despite the violence and greed that marred it from the outset. The venture would be remembered for the skill and endurance of many of its members. As the first Europeans to enter the eastern Pacific, the expedition radically altered Europe's understanding of the world, while posterity would lionize Magellan for an accomplishment that he never lived to see.

Despite the aura of heroism that has formed around Magellan, his voyage was not driven by geographic curiosity, but by trade and Spain's struggle to surpass Portugal. Following Christopher Columbus's voyages of the 1490s and the discovery of a landmass to the west, the two premier naval powers competed to control the new vistas opening before them. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI drew a line from north to south down the Atlantic, decreeing that Spain could exploit the new continent to the west. The papal bull did not specify, however, that Portugal could exploit the territory to the east of the line.

Portugal cried foul, pointing out that the pope, a Borgia of Spanish descent, was not an impartial arbiter. To avoid a war, direct talks opened between Portugal and Spain and the line was moved farther west in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. This allowed Portugal more room to maneuver down the eastern coastline of Africa. Happily for the Portuguese, Pedro Álvares Cabral's 1500 discovery of the eastern coastline of South America fell on Portugal's side of the 1494 line.

Portugal had already bested Spain in the exploration race, when in 1497 Vasco de Gama was the first European to discover a sea route to India around Africa. While this period of global exploration is often associated with the Americas, both powers were also seeking riches in the Asia-Pacific. It was there that Magellan gained experience vital to his later expedition.

A Sea Change

Born Fernão de Magalhães in northern Portugal in 1480, Magellan grew up in a noble family. At age 10 he was sent to Lisbon to train as a page in

FROM FIVE TO ONE

AUGUST 10, 1519

Backed by Spain's King Charles, five vessels under Magellan's command leave Seville to find a western route to the Spice Islands.

MAY 1520

A storm wrecks one of Magellan's ships, the *Santiago,* while it is scouting the eastern coastline of South America.

CAROLVS . V .
RO . IMPER .

KING CHARLES OF SPAIN. 1521 MEDAL, NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, MADRID

ASF/ALBUM

CITY OF GOLD
Colonial Spain's wealth from the Americas was received and carefully controlled from the southern port city of Seville, where Magellan's expedition departed in 1519 and returned three years later.

TONO BALAGUER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

NOVEMBER 28, 1520

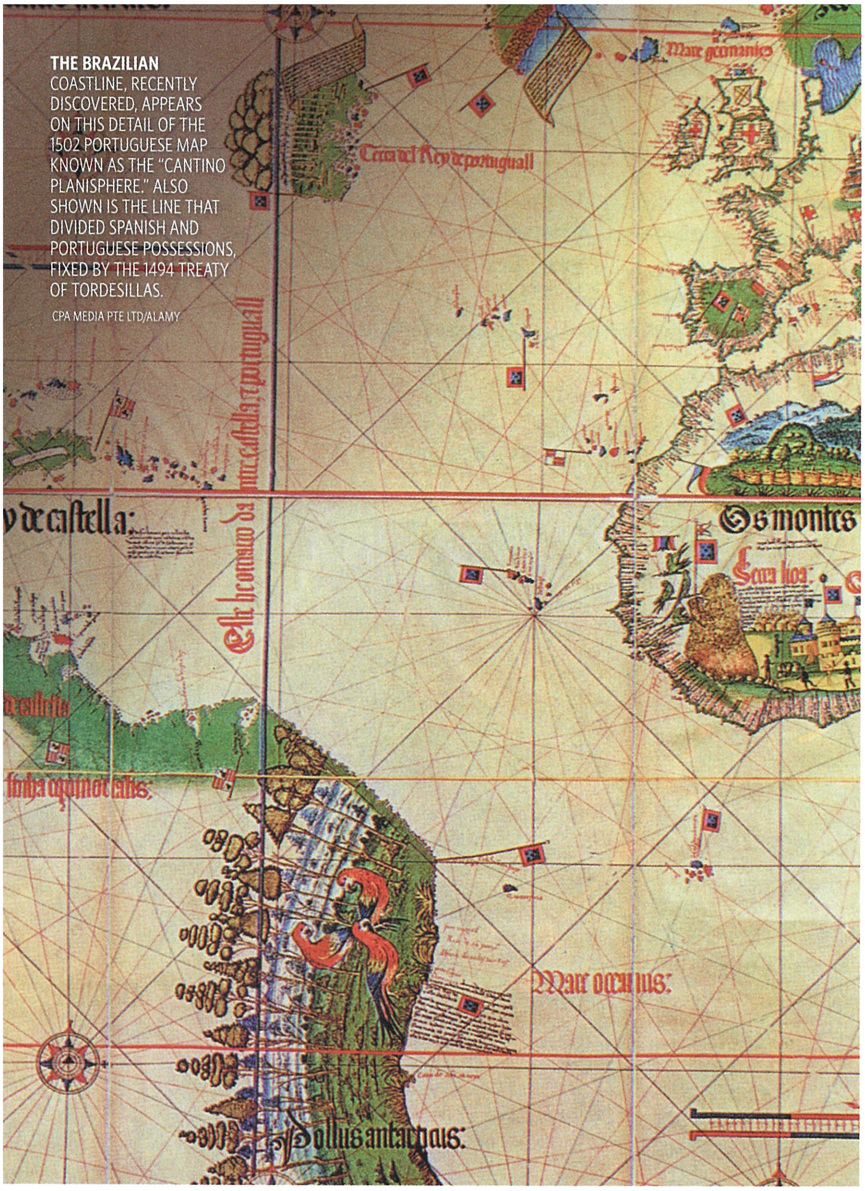
Following the desertion of the *San Antonio,* Magellan's fleet of three safely navigates the Strait of Magellan and emerges into the Pacific Ocean.

MAY 2, 1521

After the loss of Magellan and many crew members, there are not enough people to sail three ships, so the *Concepción* is emptied and destroyed.

DECEMBER 1521

When preparing to depart the Moluccas, the crew discovers the *Trinidad* is leaking. It is abandoned, leaving the *Victoria* the only ship to return to Spain.



THE BRAZILIAN COASTLINE, RECENTLY DISCOVERED, APPEARS ON THIS DETAIL OF THE 1502 PORTUGUESE MAP KNOWN AS THE "CANTINO PLANISPHERE." ALSO SHOWN IS THE LINE THAT DIVIDED SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE POSSESSIONS, FIXED BY THE 1494 TREATY OF TORDESILLAS.

CPA MEDIA PTE LTD/ALAMY

the court of Queen Leonora. He came of age as Europe began shaking off its medieval sensibilities and looking outward. The few sources on his early life suggest he became fascinated with maps and charts, an interest that may have coincided with the news, at age 13, of the Spanish expedition under Columbus that had made landfall in the Americas.

Portuguese eastward expansion began to move rapidly after Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1497. By 1505 the 25-year-old Magellan was with the Portuguese fleet heading around the Cape, and up the other side, to East Africa. The aim of King Manuel of Portugal was to wrest control of the entire Indian Ocean from the Arabs so as to control trade with India.

In 1507 Magellan participated in a naval battle that consolidated Portuguese power over the Indian Ocean. More Portuguese victories followed in Goa (western India), and in 1511 the Portuguese seized Malacca on the Malay Peninsula. The city overlooks the strait through which the spices from modern-day Indonesia were funneled westward. By controlling Malacca, Portugal could exert control over the spice trade.

An older relative (and possible cousin) of Magellan, Francisco Serrão, had also forged a dramatic career as a sailor and took part in the seizure of Malacca before going on an expedition to the Moluccas, or Spice Islands, in 1512. His venture would later inspire Magellan's own goal to reach them by sailing west from Europe.

Magellan took part in the battle for Malacca and honed his navigational skills during Portugal's eastern victories. After returning to Europe, in 1514 he entered into a bitter dispute with King Manuel over the king's refusal to reward him. Having used up all his appeals, Magellan rejected his native land and traveled to the Spanish court at Valladolid in 1517 to offer his services to the Spanish king Charles I (who would become Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in June 1519). From that day, Fernão de Magalhães would be known by his Spanish name, Fernando de Magallanes.

By offering his services to Spain, Magellan was not engaging in any truly scandalous behavior. Seafaring expertise often crossed borders, and crews were drawn from different nations. Columbus too, a Genoan from northern Italy, had offered himself to the Spanish crown after initially working for the Portuguese. Magellan's plan was strikingly similar to Columbus's from nearly 30 years earlier: to sail west to bring back spices from the Moluccas, the Spice Islands of Indonesia.

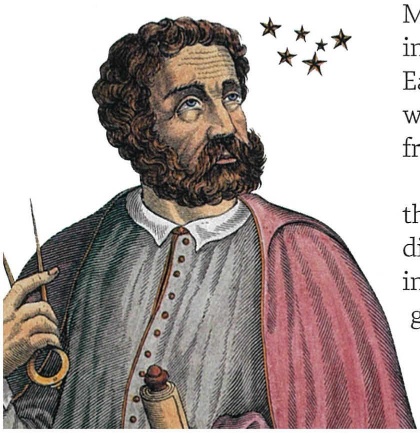
Citing the theories of other navigators at the time, Magellan postulated that a strait cut through the Americas to a sea whose eastern shore was first glimpsed by Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa in 1513. If he could find it, this passage would allow Spain a kind of "back-door" access to the Moluccas, bypassing Portugal's Cape route. Magellan's reputation as a sailor and his knowledge of the east convinced Charles, and the expedition received royal assent.

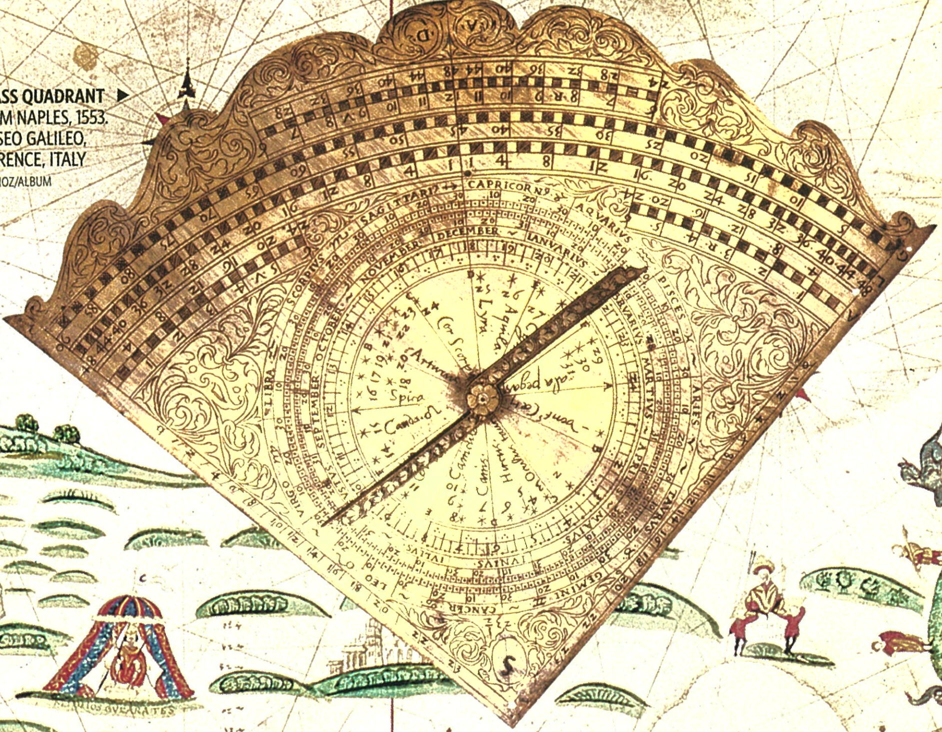
Not all were happy that this Portuguese interloper had gained such favor with the king. The nobility and the Casa de Contratación (the state body that controlled such expeditions) took every opportunity to obstruct Magellan's preparations. Under two-thirds of the crew were Spaniards; of the foreigners, 24 were Portuguese and 27 were Italian.

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

A compass and a rolled-up chart emphasize Magellan's fame as a navigator in a 16th-century colored engraving of the Portuguese explorer (below).

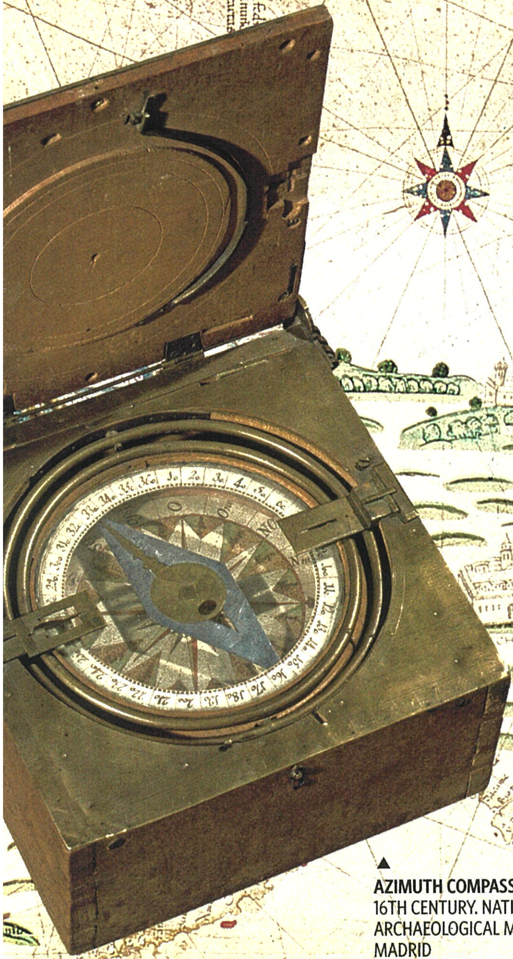
ALBUM





BRASS QUADRANT FROM NAPLES, 1553. MUSEO GALILEO, FLORENCE, ITALY

ORONOZ/ALBUM

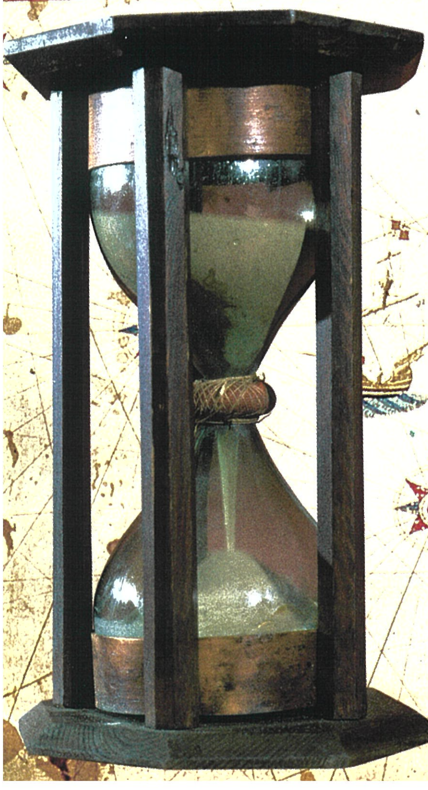


AZIMUTH COMPASS 16TH CENTURY. NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, MADRID

ORONOZ/ALBUM

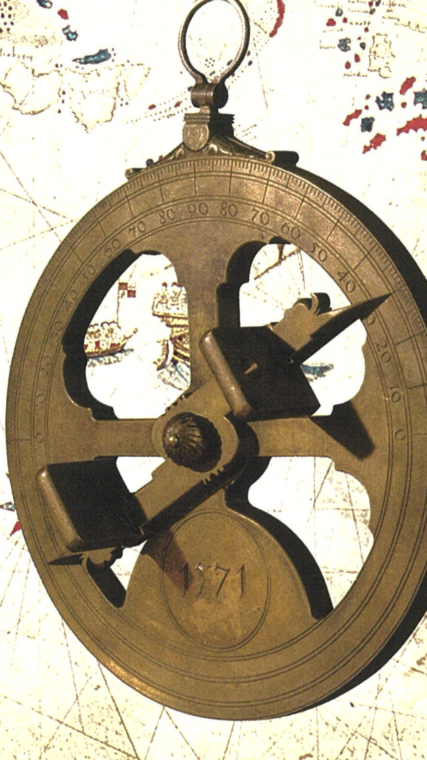
MAP OF THE MOLUCCAS, MADE IN 1522 BY NUÑO GARCÍA DE TORENO FROM 1522. ROYAL LIBRARY OF TURIN, ITALY

AGE FOTOSTOCK



HOURGLASS 16TH CENTURY. NAVAL MUSEUM OF MADRID

ORONOZ/ALBUM

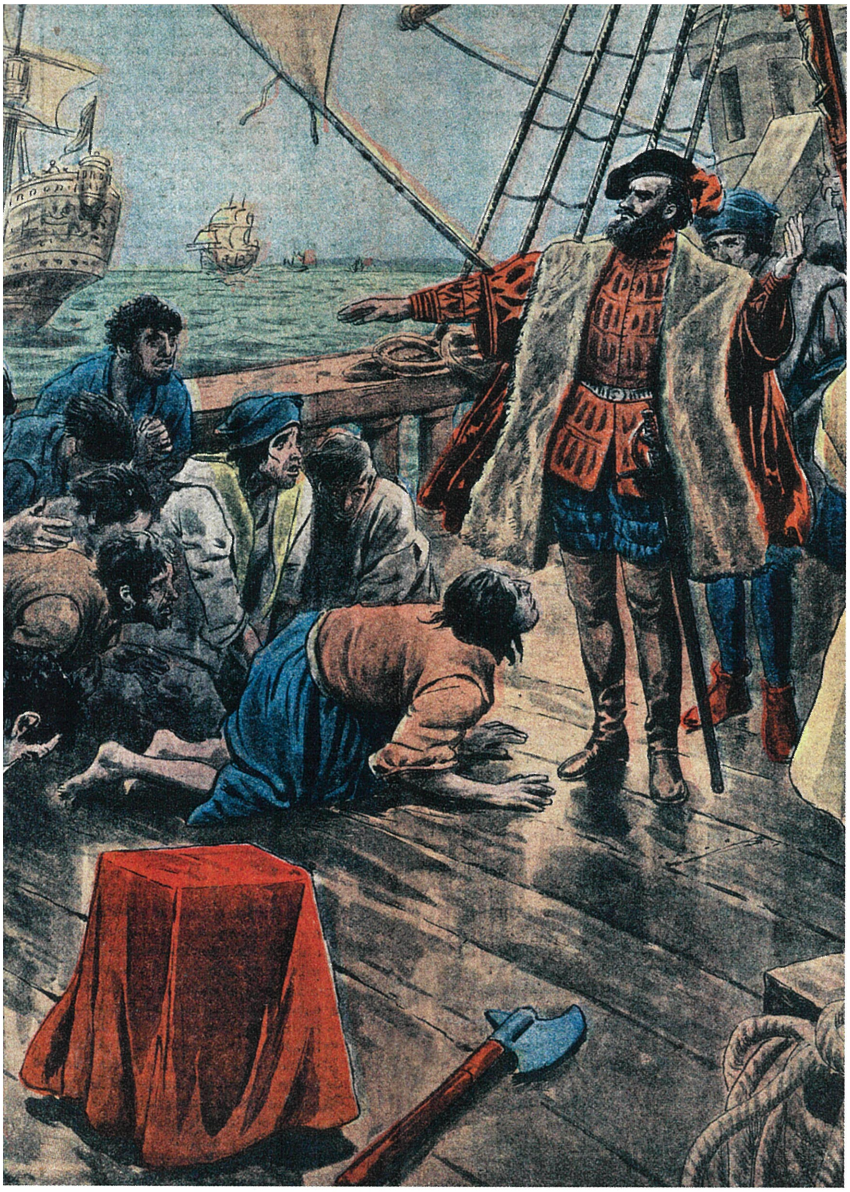


NAUTICAL ASTROLABE 1571. NAVAL MUSEUM OF MADRID

ORONOZ/ALBUM

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Expert seamen like Magellan were comfortable using astrolabes, compasses, and other navigational instruments. Magellan's expedition was well stocked with them and included the following in its inventory: 50 compasses, 21 wooden quadrants, 24 navigation charts, seven astrolabes, and 18 hourglasses.



MAGELLAN'S MERCY

In sight of the execution block, sailors plead with Magellan in a 19th-century painting by Eugène Damblans (above). Magellan quelled an April 1520 mutiny and beheaded one of its leaders.

WHITE IMAGES/SCALA, FLORENCE

Marvels and Mutiny

Among the crew was a young Venetian nobleman named Antonio Pigafetta, a student of astronomy and geography. Pigafetta's lively journal became history's principal written source for detailed information on the entire voyage.

"On Monday, August 10, St. Lawrence's day, the fleet, having been supplied with all the things necessary for the sea, made ready to leave the harbor of Seville," Pigafetta recorded in his log. Five ships in total—the *San Antonio,* the *Concepción,* the *Victoria,* the *Santiago*, and the flagship, the *Trinidad*—struck out west from Spain via the Canary Islands. Pigafetta's observations were not solely nautical. He took a lively interest in geography and zoology and science, noting different kinds of birds and wildlife.

While Pigafetta wrote his log, Magellan was deeply concerned about his authority. He was officially the supreme commander, but prior to departure, pressure from the Spanish authorities had forced him to accept a nobleman, Juan de Cartagena, as the voyage's second-in-command. This decision led to violent power struggles during the voyage. Early on, Magellan was forced to arrest and demote Cartagena for insubordination. As a royal appointee, he was otherwise untouchable, but his resentful presence would prove nearly catastrophic for Magellan later.

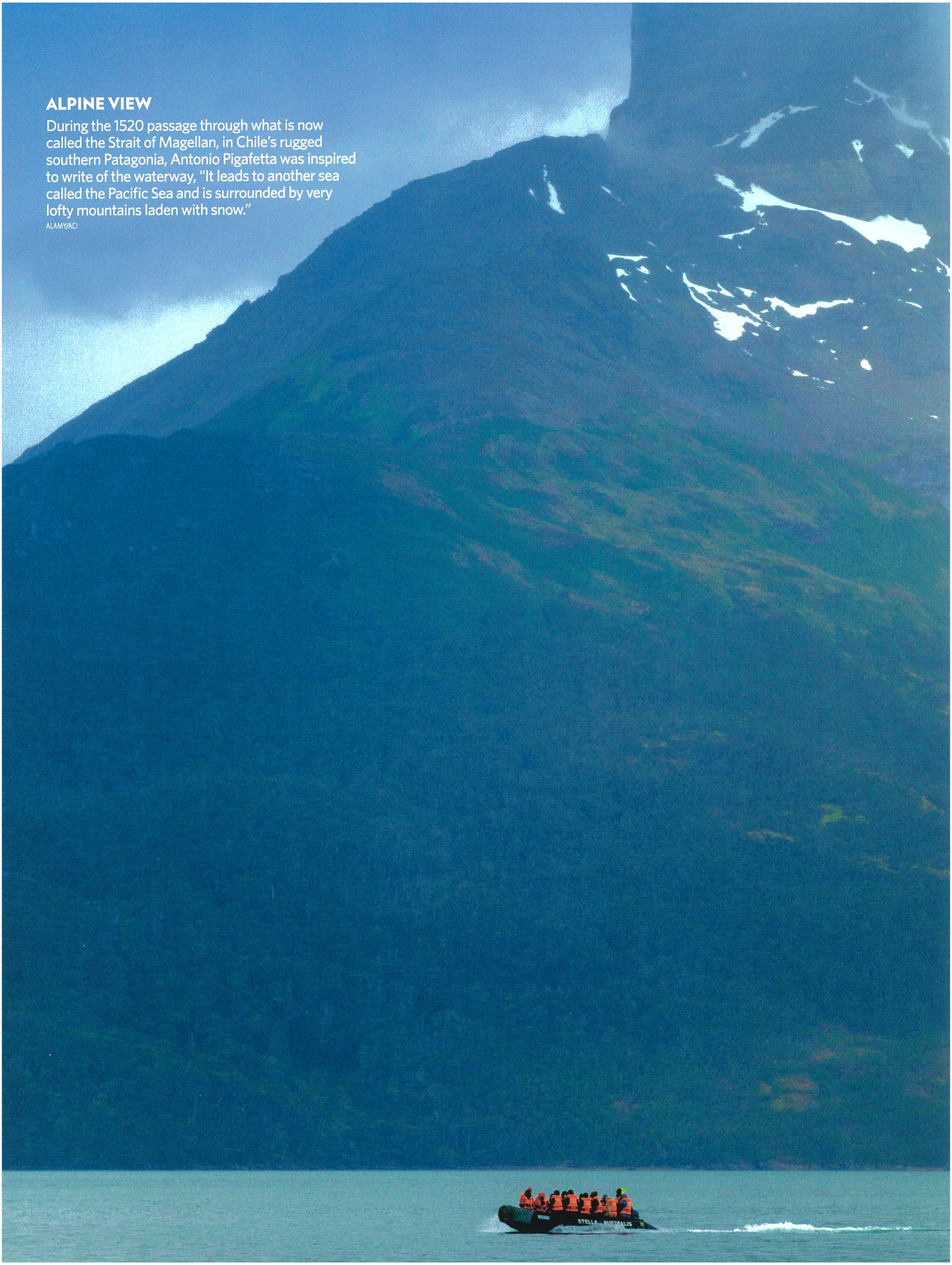
The coast of modern-day Brazil, which Europeans had only been aware of for 20 years, was a source of wonder. But it was its inhabitants that captured Pigafetta's attention most. He recorded in his journal that some of the people of "Verdin" (as he called it)

> *live a hundred, or a hundred and twenty, or a hundred and forty years, and more; they go naked, both men and women. Their dwellings are houses that are rather long . . . [and] in each of these houses . . . there dwells a family of a hundred persons, who make a great noise. In this place they have boats, which are made of a tree, all in one piece, which they call "canoo." These are not made with iron instruments, for they have not got any . . . Into these thirty or forty men enter.*

Pigafetta's writings revealed a condescending attitude toward the indigenous peoples. His descriptions of the peoples he meets in Patagonia, the Pacific Islands, and lands in Asia are centered on the amount of clothing worn, physical traits including skin color, height, and build, and whether they could be converted to Christianity. He recorded certain words from their languages, many of which related to commodities that could be of use to colonial Spain.

The small armada sailed south, scanning for any strait or opening in the great landmass to starboard. A great inlet in early 1520 aroused much excitement. Once it had been ascertained it was not the longed-for strait, but a river mouth (the Río de la Plata), the fleet continued south to San Julián, where, in April, surrounded on all sides by the frozen expanse of Patagonia, a full-scale mutiny was launched against Magellan by the captains of the four other ships.

Played out across five vessels, the scenes were chaotic and confusing, but Magellan prevailed. In the ensuing skirmishes, the rebellious captains of the Victoria and the Concepción were arrested and executed. One of the leaders of the



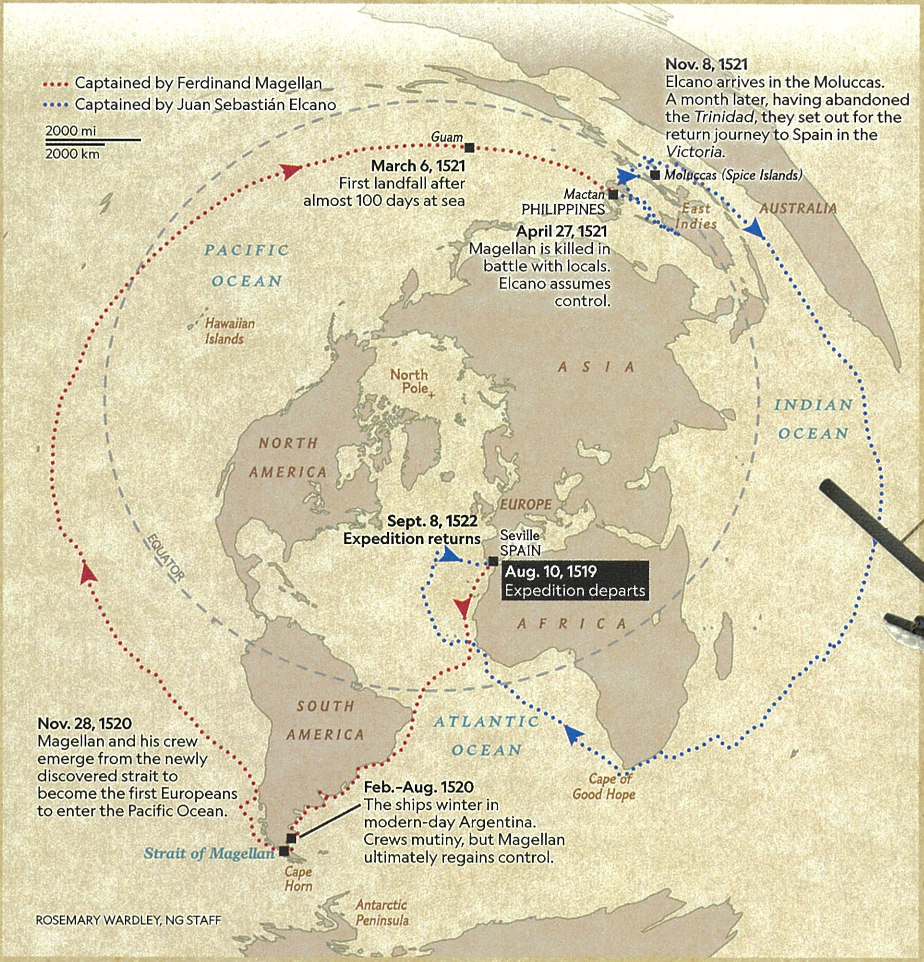
ALPINE VIEW

During the 1520 passage through what is now called the Strait of Magellan, in Chile's rugged southern Patagonia, Antonio Pigafetta was inspired to write of the waterway, "It leads to another sea called the Pacific Sea and is surrounded by very lofty mountains laden with snow."

ALAMY/ACI

VICTORIA'S SAGA

The *Victoria*, a three-masted Spanish carrack, was the only vessel in Magellan's fleet of five to complete the circumnavigation of the globe. After this auspicious journey, the ship continued to sail for nearly 50 more years as a merchant ship. The *Victoria*'s last journey ended around 1570, when the ship was lost on a voyage from the Antilles to Seville.


Captained by Ferdinand Magellan
Captained by Juan Sebastián Elcano
2000 mi
2000 km
Guam
Mactan
PHILIPPINES
Moluccas (Spice Islands)
East Indies
AUSTRALIA
PACIFIC OCEAN
Hawaiian Islands
ASIA
North Pole
INDIAN OCEAN
NORTH AMERICA
EUROPE
EQUATOR
Seville
SPAIN
AFRICA
SOUTH AMERICA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Cape of Good Hope
Strait of Magellan
Cape Horn
Antarctic Peninsula

Nov. 8, 1521
Elcano arrives in the Moluccas. A month later, having abandoned the *Trinidad*, they set out for the return journey to Spain in the *Victoria*.

March 6, 1521
First landfall after almost 100 days at sea

April 27, 1521
Magellan is killed in battle with locals. Elcano assumes control.

Sept. 8, 1522
Expedition returns

Aug. 10, 1519
Expedition departs

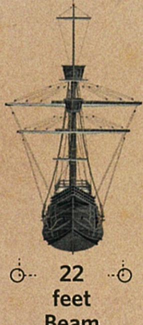
Nov. 28, 1520
Magellan and his crew emerge from the newly discovered strait to become the first Europeans to enter the Pacific Ocean.

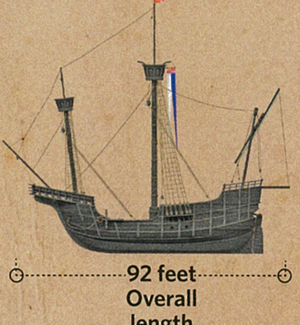
Feb.–Aug. 1520
The ships winter in modern-day Argentina. Crews mutiny, but Magellan ultimately regains control.

ROSEMARY WARDLEY, NG STAFF

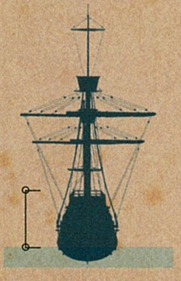
A LITTLE WINNER

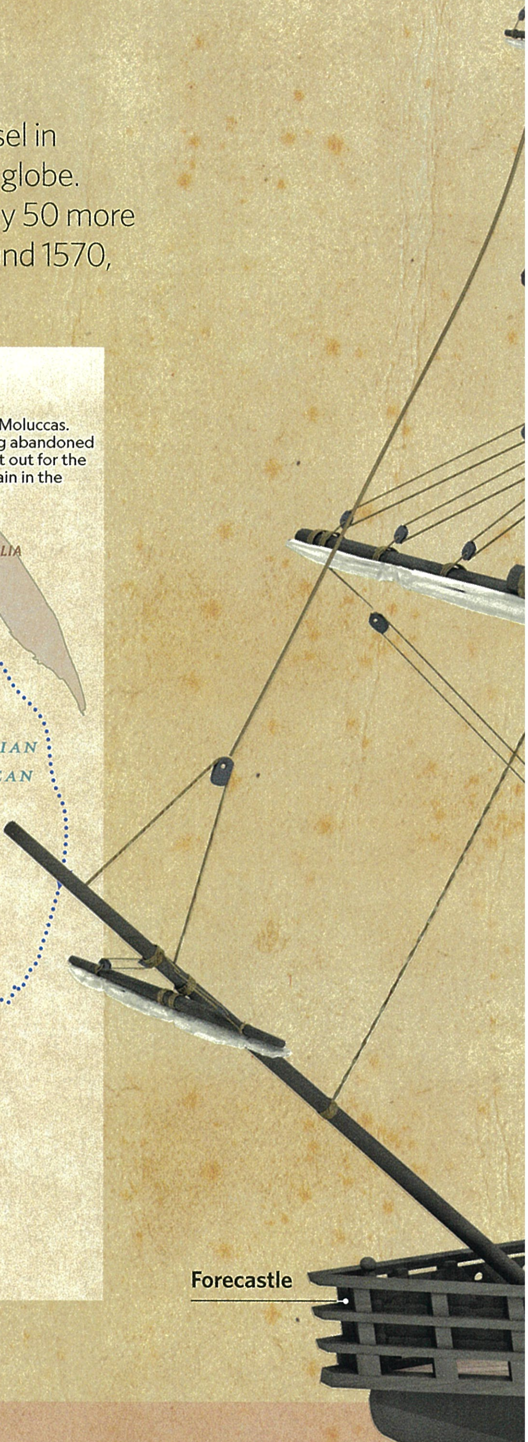
Beginning life on the commercial route between Spain and England, the 85-ton *Victoria* was bought for Magellan's expedition for 800 ducats (below its market value) in the name of the crown. With a maximum crew of 45, it was the second smallest craft in Magellan's fleet.

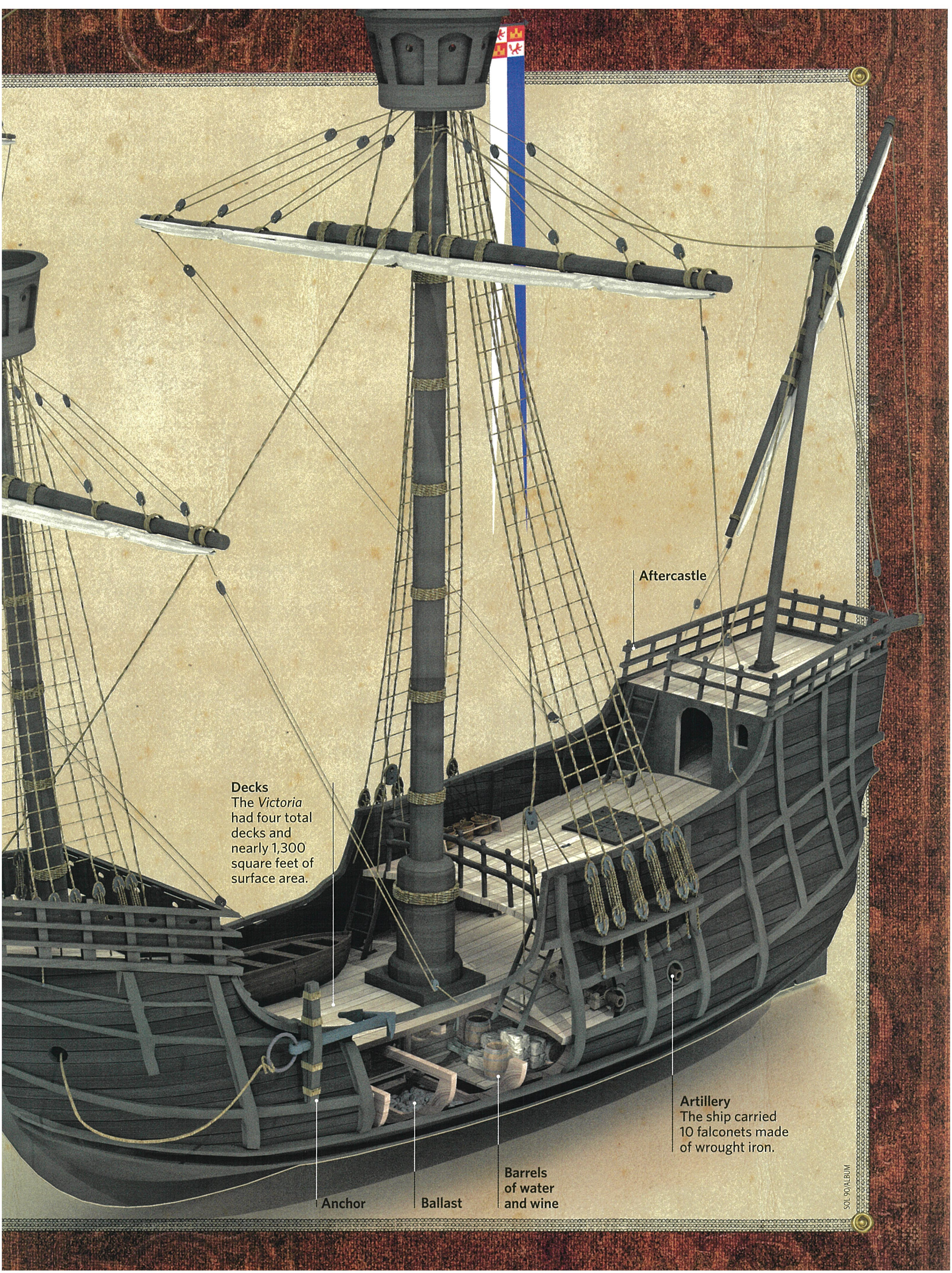

22 feet Beam


92 feet Overall length

Carracks had high freeboards, (the amount of ship visible above the water). This design reduced the ship's speed while increasing cargo space. It also made it less likely to be toppled by high seas.




Forecastle



Aftercastle

Decks
The *Victoria* had four total decks and nearly 1,300 square feet of surface area.

Artillery
The ship carried 10 falconets made of wrought iron.

Anchor

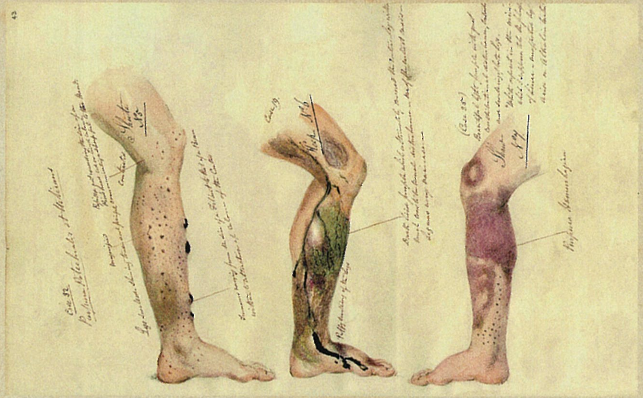
Ballast

Barrels of water and wine

SOL 90/ALBUM

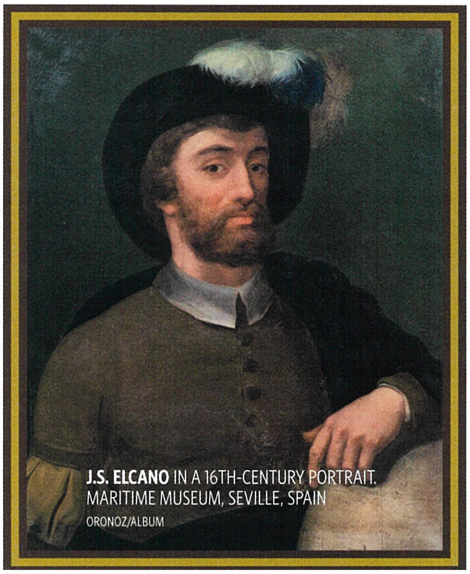
Savaged by Scurvy

WHILE CROSSING THE PACIFIC, Pigafetta recorded how many of Magellan's crew seemed to waste away from a horrific illness: Their gums bled, their limbs ulcerated, and delirium addled their minds. Scurvy and its symptoms, which are caused by a lack of vitamin C, would ravage many European expeditions. The captain who completed the Magellan expedition, Juan Sebastián Elcano, succumbed to scurvy on a later voyage, and it killed an estimated two million sailors between the 15th and 18th centuries. The medical properties of vitamin C were not discovered until the 1920s, but it became common wisdom in the 1700s that citrus fruit could be a preventative, a remedy that was resisted by some in the British Navy. It was not until the 1790s that fruit was distributed routinely among crews.



SCURVY SYMPTOMS, SKETCHED BY A BRITISH NAVAL SURGEON ON AN 1841-42 VOYAGE
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES UK

revolt was the demoted and resentful Juan de Cartagena. Magellan opted to maroon him on an island, thus avoiding shedding the blood of a powerful nobleman, while also ridding himself of an incompetent troublemaker. Cartagena's fate is unknown, but other mutineers were pardoned, including one of the officers, Juan Sebastián Elcano.



J.S. ELCANO IN A 16TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT. MARITIME MUSEUM, SEVILLE, SPAIN
ORONOZ/ALBUM

Shortly after the failed mutiny, as resentments still simmered, Magellan lost the *Santiago* in a storm. Unbowed, the reduced fleet continued south until glacial conditions forced a halt for two months to provision; then it set out once more. Finally, as Pigafetta records on "the day of the feast of the eleven thousand virgins," St. Ursula's Day which falls on October 21, they sighted a strait "surrounded by lofty mountains laden with snow . . . Had it not been for the captain-general, we would not have found that strait, for we all thought that it was closed on all sides."

For over a month, buffeted by storms and currents, the fleet ventured down the strait that Charles V would later name for Magellan. The commander named an archipelago they saw on the south side Tierra del Fuego ("land of fire") in reference to the many bonfires lit there by its indigenous hunter-gatherer peoples, who had occupied this tip of South America for millennia.

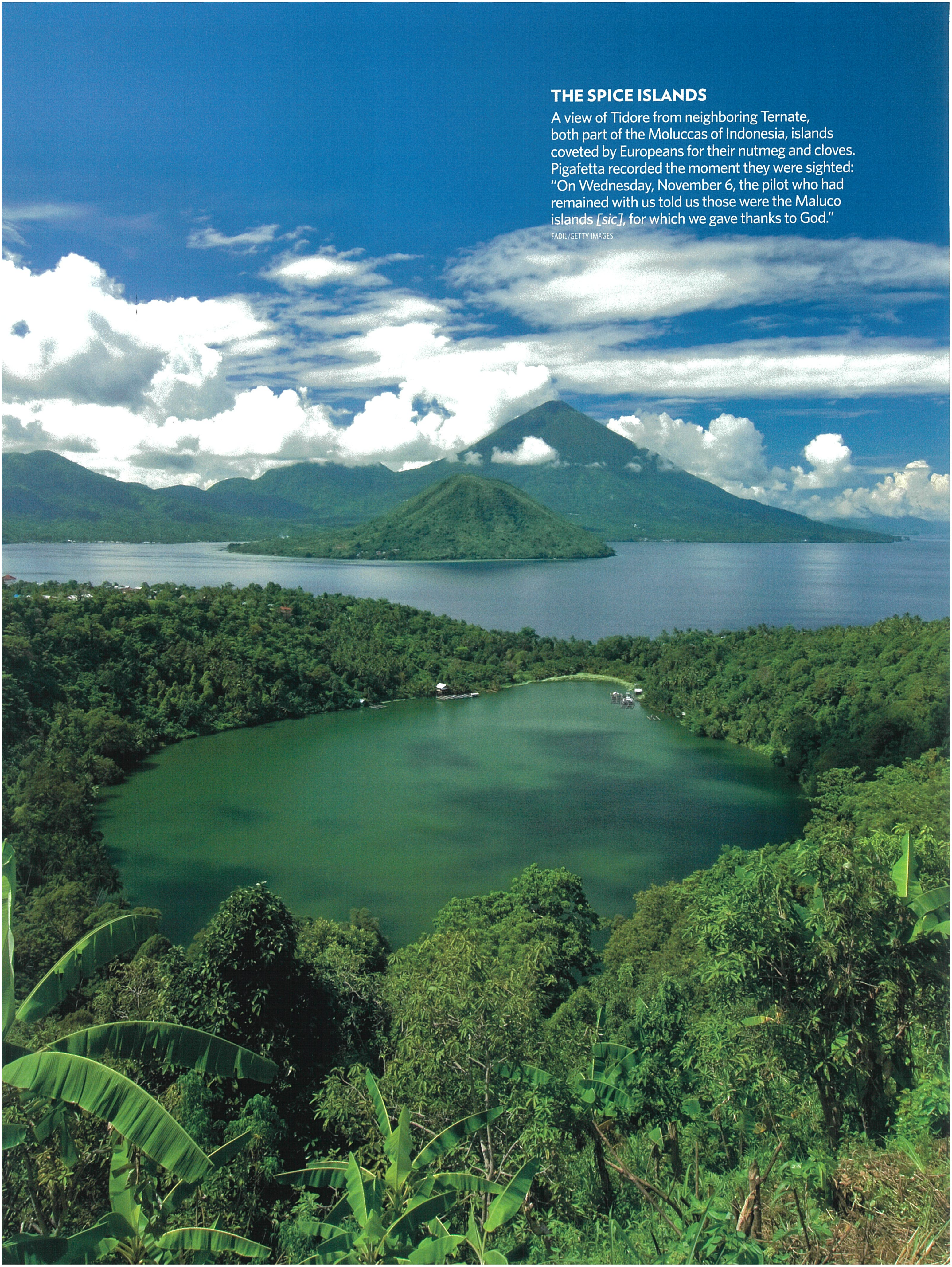
In the course of this passage, another ship disappeared: the *San Antonio*. Pigafetta records it had been believed lost; in fact, it had deserted and was returning to Spain. Equipped now with only three vessels, Magellan and his men "on Wednesday, November 28, 1520, . . . debouched from that strait, engulfing . . . in the Pacific Sea." They were the first Europeans to enter that vast ocean from its eastern shore.

Hard Crossing

After being borne northward along what is today the Chilean coast, Magellan's fleet finally struck out northwest in search of land beyond. Magellan knew that the Malay archipelago he had visited years before must lie somewhere to the west. To find it, the limping expedition had to sail through rough seas for over three months.

Hunger and disease stalked the crossing. Pigafetta records how he and his crewmates ate sawdust, ox hides, and "biscuit, which was no longer biscuit, but powder of biscuits swarming with worms, and which stank strongly of the urine of rats." General privation, the lack of food, and illness greatly reduced their numbers. Perhaps the most devastating was scurvy, the distinctive symptoms of which Pigafetta captured: "[I]t was that the upper and lower gums of most of our men grew so much that they could not eat, and in this way so many suffered, that nineteen died."

On March 6, 1521, after 100 days in Pacific waters, the exhausted armada finally was able to make landfall in the Mariana Islands where they restocked the ships and then continued west. Days later, they reached an archipelago (later christened the Philippines by another Spanish explorer) of many inhabited islands that Magellan would attempt to claim for Spain. The crew celebrated mass on the island of Limasawa in late March and then converted the rulers of Cebu Island to Christianity. Magellan heard that rivals



THE SPICE ISLANDS

A view of Tidore from neighboring Ternate, both part of the Moluccas of Indonesia, islands coveted by Europeans for their nutmeg and cloves. Pigafetta recorded the moment they were sighted: "On Wednesday, November 6, the pilot who had remained with us told us those were the Maluco islands *[sic]*, for which we gave thanks to God."

FADIL/GETTY IMAGES

A Nation of Islands

MADE UP OF ABOUT 7,460 ISLANDS, The Philippines has a long past stretching back to prehistoric times. Recent fossil finds on the island of Luzon established that ancient humans were living there roughly 700,000 years ago. Other archaeological sites throughout the islands have revealed the presence of different human groups over time, although many scholars debate exactly how and when they arrived. New waves of migration would continue over millennia, and a rich culture began to thrive in the archipelago, attracting the attention of neighboring cultures. Chinese merchants, who had been trading with the islanders for centuries, would greatly expand trade relations between the 10th and 14th centuries A.D. Arab traders and missionaries from the Malay Peninsula followed in the 13th century and brought Islam with them. With Europeans' arrival in 1521 came Christianity and colonial rule that would last for more than 300 years until the Philippines became an independent nation in 1946.

INSVLA MATHAN
Victoria

MACTAN ISLAND, THE PHILIPPINES. GERMAN ENGRAVING, 1603 GRANGER/ALBUM

of the Becu who lived on the nearby island of Mactan refused to convert and submit to Spain. Magellan tried to claim their land for Spain and their souls for the church, but the occupants of Mactan Island, led by the chieftain known traditionally as Lapulapu, stood firm in the face of Spanish guns and swords. On April 27, 1521, Magellan led 60 men to the island with an ultimatum to surrender. The islanders refused, and a fierce battle ensued, which Pigafetta recounted:

> *When we reached land we found the islanders fifteen hundred in number . . . they came down upon us with terrible shouts . . . seeing that the shots of our guns did them little or no harm [they] would not retire, but shouted more loudly, and . . . at the same time drew nearer to us, throwing arrows, javelins, spears hardened in fire, stones, and even mud, so that we could hardly defend ourselves.*

Pigafetta reported that Magellan was killed by Lapulapu and his warriors on the shore. Despite Spanish firepower, the islanders quickly overcame the invaders with their numbers and bravery and drove them back. The Europeans retreated, leaving their commander to die on the beach; Magellan's body was never recovered. Later, the king of Cebu would turn against the Europeans, too, and kill 26 of them. The remaining Europeans soon departed.

Their numbers dwindling, the surviving crew, under the command of Juan Sebastián Elcano, did finally reach the Moluccas in November 1521. They were able to stock up the ships with spices and goods to bring back to Spain. Having been forced to abandon two of their three remaining ships, the crew would return to Spain in a fleet of one—the *Victoria*. Ten months later, the ship and its bedraggled crew of 18, including Pigafetta, entered Seville's harbor.

Final Frontier

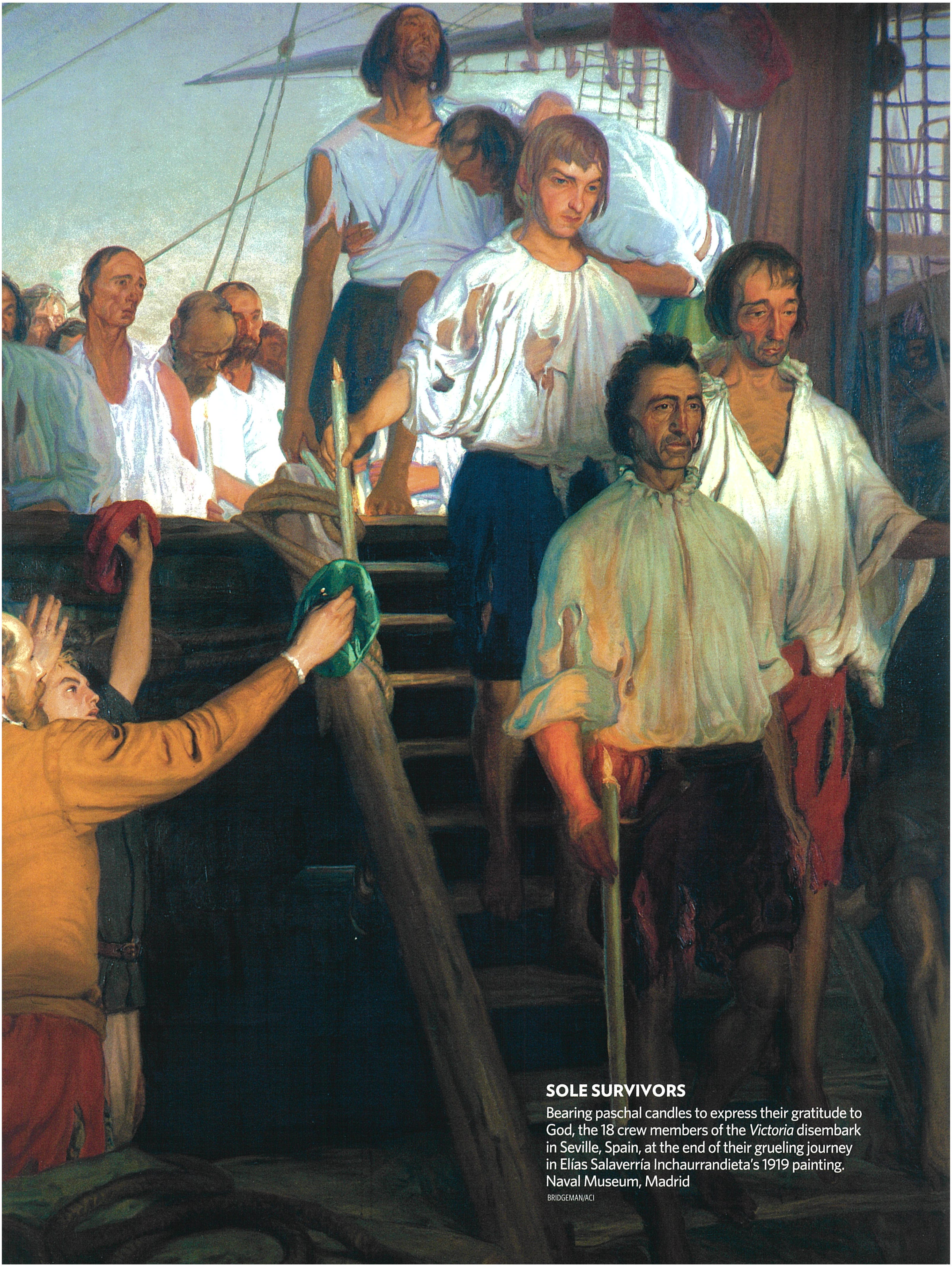
The first continuous circumnavigation of the world was complete. It took almost exactly three years and, surprisingly, turned a profit. The 381 sacks of cloves brought back by the *Victoria* were worth more than all five ships that had set out on the voyage. Despite the hopes and funds invested, it did not translate into immediate meaningful economic benefits for Spain. The treacherous course around the tip of South America was never a practical route for trade with the Moluccas.

Despite the death and destruction brought on by the voyage, many historians believe Magellan's expedition was a worthy accomplishment. The careful records kept by Pigafetta and others dramatically expanded Europe's knowledge of the world beyond the Atlantic, giving cartographers a firm sense of the world's actual size and future navigators intelligence on the conditions and currents of the Pacific Ocean. Europeans had known of the eastern shore of the Pacific since 1513, but Magellan revealed its sheer size and power, knowledge that transformed Europeans' understanding of the extent of the globe. ■

JULIUS PURCELL IS DEPUTY EDITOR OF *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC HISTORY*

Learn more

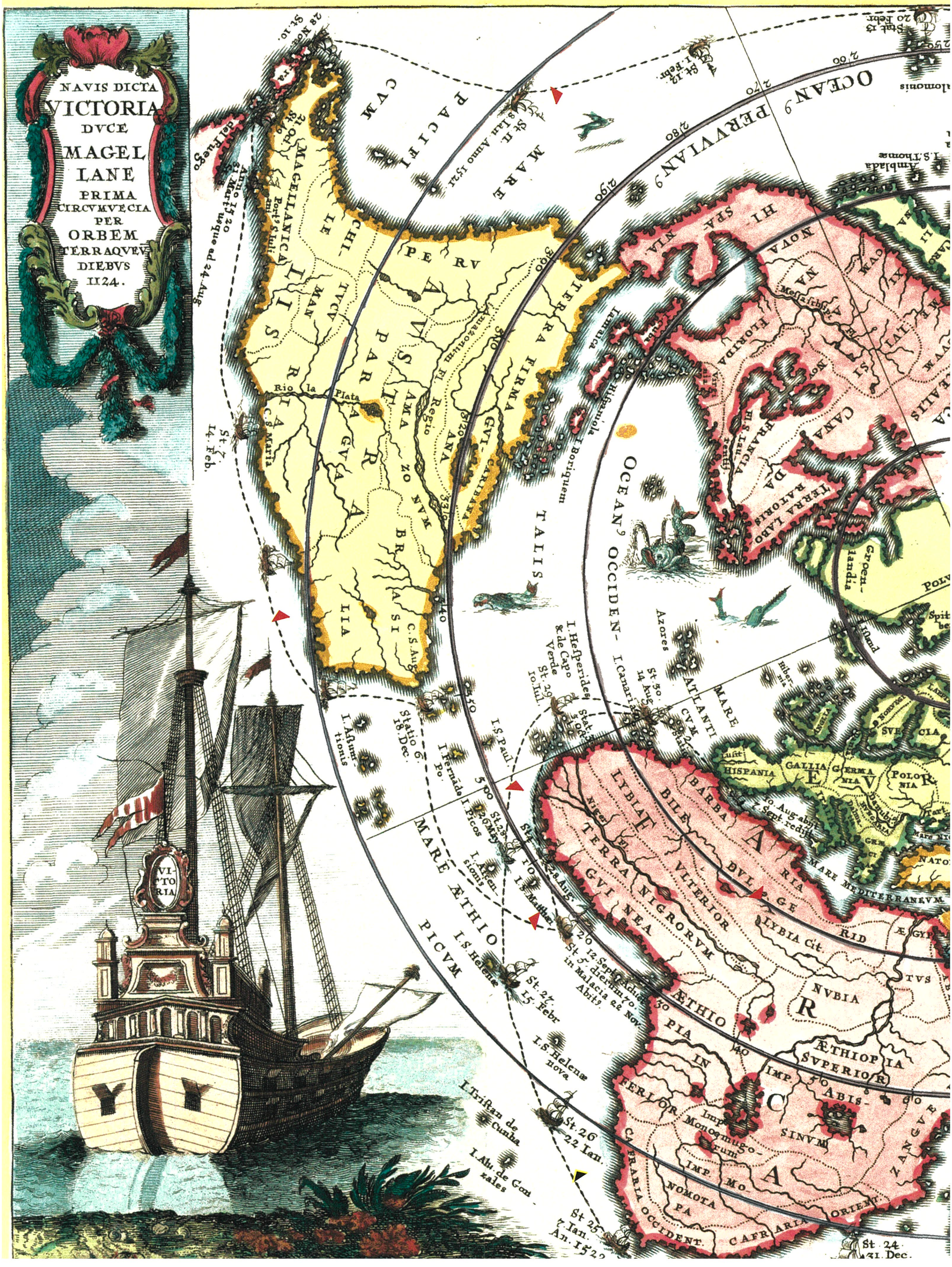
Over the Edge of the World: Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe
Laurence Bergreen, William Morrow, 2019.



SOLE SURVIVORS

Bearing paschal candles to express their gratitude to God, the 18 crew members of the *Victoria* disembark in Seville, Spain, at the end of their grueling journey in Elías Salaverría Inchaurrandieta's 1919 painting. Naval Museum, Madrid

BRIDGEMAN/ACI


NAVIS DICTA VICTORIA DVCE MAGELLANE PRIMA CIRCVMVECIA PER ORBEM TERRAQVEV DIEBVS 1124.
VICTORIA
MARE PACIFICVM
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MAGELLANICA
CHILE
PERV
AMERICA AVSTRALIS
TERRA FIRMA
GVIANA
Rio la Plata
PARAGVAIA
AMAZONVM
BRASILIA
C.S.Aug
C.S.Maria
St.7. 14. Feb.
Anno 1520 31 Martii usque ad 24 Aug.
St. 11. Jan. Anno 1521
St.12. 1 Febr.
St.13 20 Febr.
I.S.Thomae
Amblada
Salomonis
NOVA HISPANIA
FLORIDA
NOVA FRANCIA
CANADA
TERRA LABORATORIS
Groenlandia
Jamaica
Hispaniola
I.Boriquem
OCEAN9 OCCIDENTALIS
Azores
I.Canariae
I.Hesperides & de Capo Verde
St.29 10.Jul.
St.30. 14.Aug.
MARE ATLANTICVM
Statio 6. 18.Dec.
I.Assumtionis
I.S.Paul
I.Fernado Po.
I.Picos
I.Ascensionis
I.S.Helene
I.S.Helenae nova
I.Tristan de Cunha
I.Alu.de Gonzales
MARE AETHIOPICVM
St.27. 15.Febr
St.26 22 Ian.
St.25 7 Ian. An.1522
St.24 31.Dec.
HISPANIA
GALLIA
GERMANIA
POLONIA
SVECIA
EVROPA
MARE MEDITERRANEVM
AFRICA
LYBIA
BILEDVLGERID
BARBARIA
TERRA NIGRORVM
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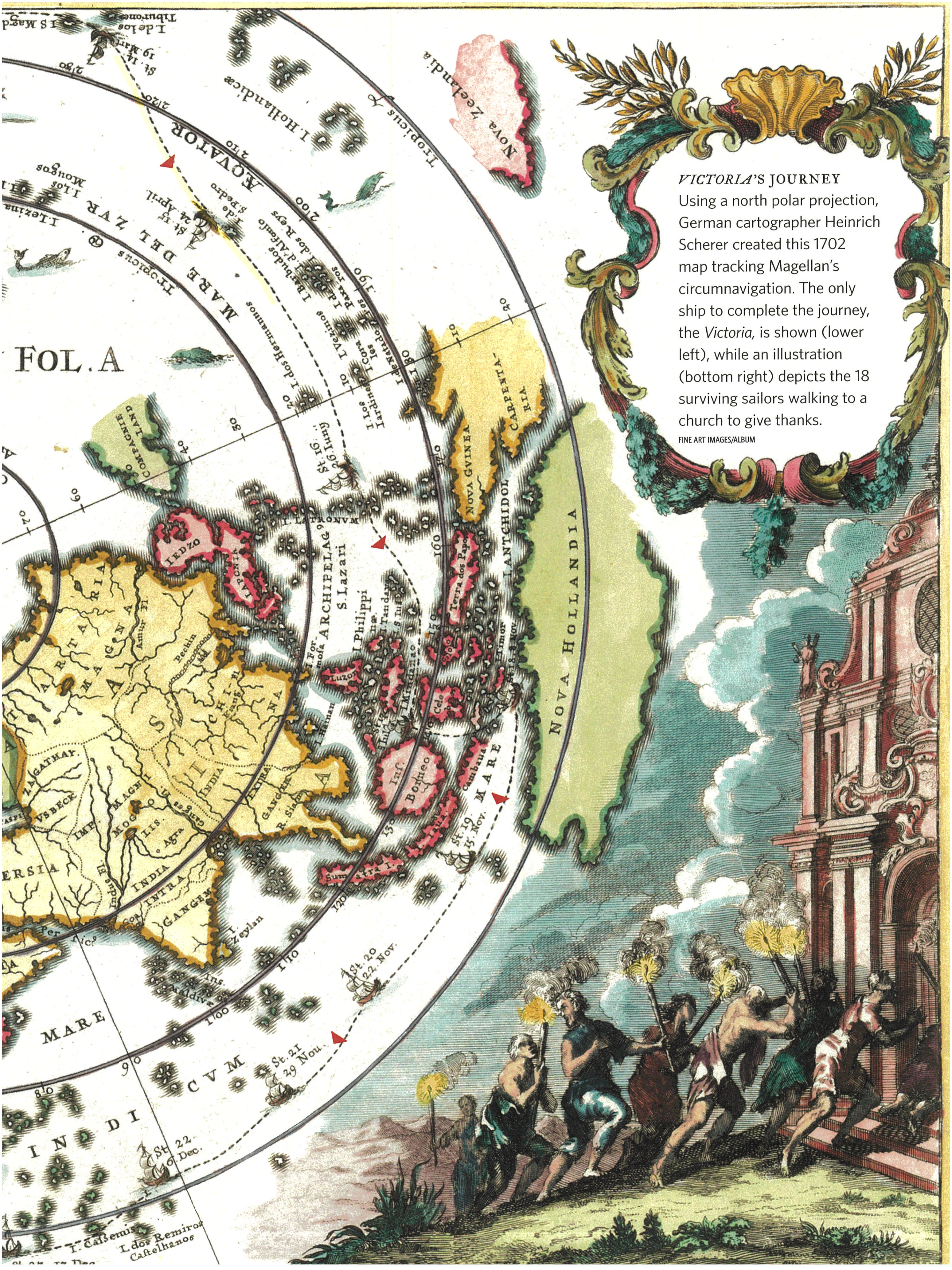
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AEQVATOR
Tropicus
Nova Zeelandia
I. Hollandicae
COMPAGNIE LAND
IEDZO
IAPONIA
I. LATRONVM
ARCHIPELAG S. Lazari
I. Philippinae
I. Formosa
Luzon
NOVA GVINEA
CARPENTARIA
Terra dos Papos
I. ANTCHIDOL
NOVA HOLLANDIA
Borneo
Sumatra
TARTARIA MAGNA
ASIA
CHINA
Pechin
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INDIA INTRA GANGEM
INDIA EXTRA GANGEM
Ceylan
Maldive
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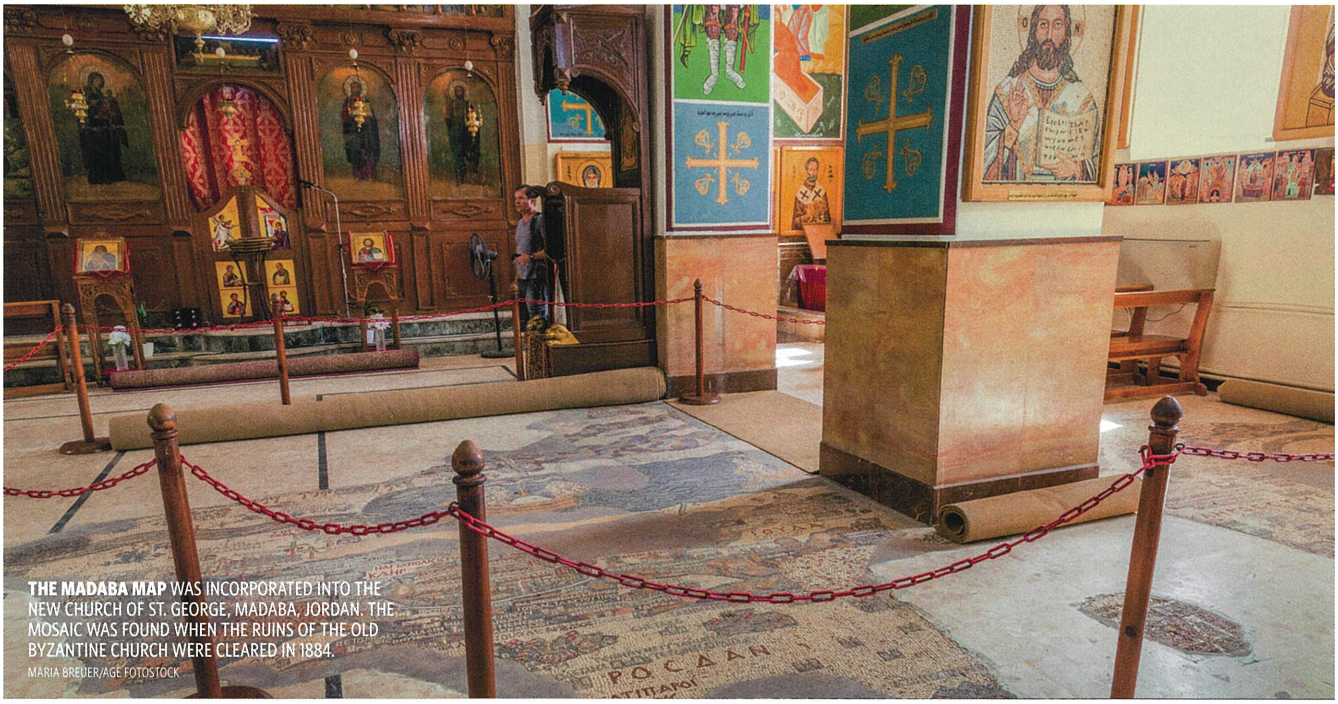
MARE INDICVM
St. 16. 26. Junij
St. 19 15. Nov.
St. 20 22. Nov.
St. 21 29 Nou.
St. 22 6. Dec.
I. Calbenis
I. dos Remiros Castelhanos

VICTORIA'S JOURNEY
Using a north polar projection, German cartographer Heinrich Scherer created this 1702 map tracking Magellan's circumnavigation. The only ship to complete the journey, the *Victoria,* is shown (lower left), while an illustration (bottom right) depicts the 18 surviving sailors walking to a church to give thanks.

FINE ART IMAGES/ALBUM

The Madaba Mosaic: First Map of the Holy Land

The stunning floor mosaic discovered in a remote Ottoman town in 1884 is both a masterpiece of Byzantine design and a working map of the sixth-century Middle East.



THE MADABA MAP WAS INCORPORATED INTO THE NEW CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE, MADABA, JORDAN. THE MOSAIC WAS FOUND WHEN THE RUINS OF THE OLD BYZANTINE CHURCH WERE CLEARED IN 1884.

MARIA BREUER/AGE FOTOSTOCK

Tensions between Muslims and Christians in the 1880s in what is today Jordan led to a compromise. The Christians could relocate to a town named Madaba on the condition they could only build churches on sites where churches had once stood before.

The proposal had a certain logic, for although Madaba by this time was a dusty, obscure outpost in the Ottoman Empire, during the Byzantine period it had been a thriving Christian city.

Med. Sea
Jerusalem
Amman
JORDAN
Madaba

In 1884 the newly settled Greek Orthodox Christians wanted to build a new Church of St. George over its former site. They duly cleared the ground over what had been the ancient church and made a stunning discovery: Underneath the rubble was a huge mosaic of a detailed map. Although damaged in places, its myriad colored fragments still depicted sites across the Holy Land, including Jerusalem, in dazzling detail.

A Unique Mosaic

Locals were excited, but the discovery was slow to attract the attention of the Greek Orthodox Christian authorities in Jerusalem, which was then under Ottoman rule. It was not until a decade later in the mid-1890s that the librarian of the Jerusalem patriarchate, Kleopas Koikylides, visited Madaba to inspect the find.

He realized straightaway the importance of the artwork. Mosaics adorning the floors of Byzantine churches generally represented cities and monuments in a

(continued on page 94)

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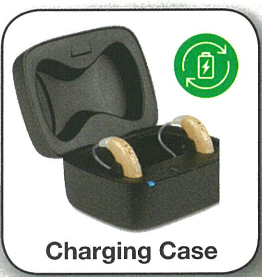

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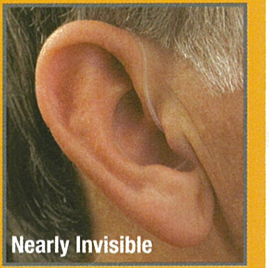

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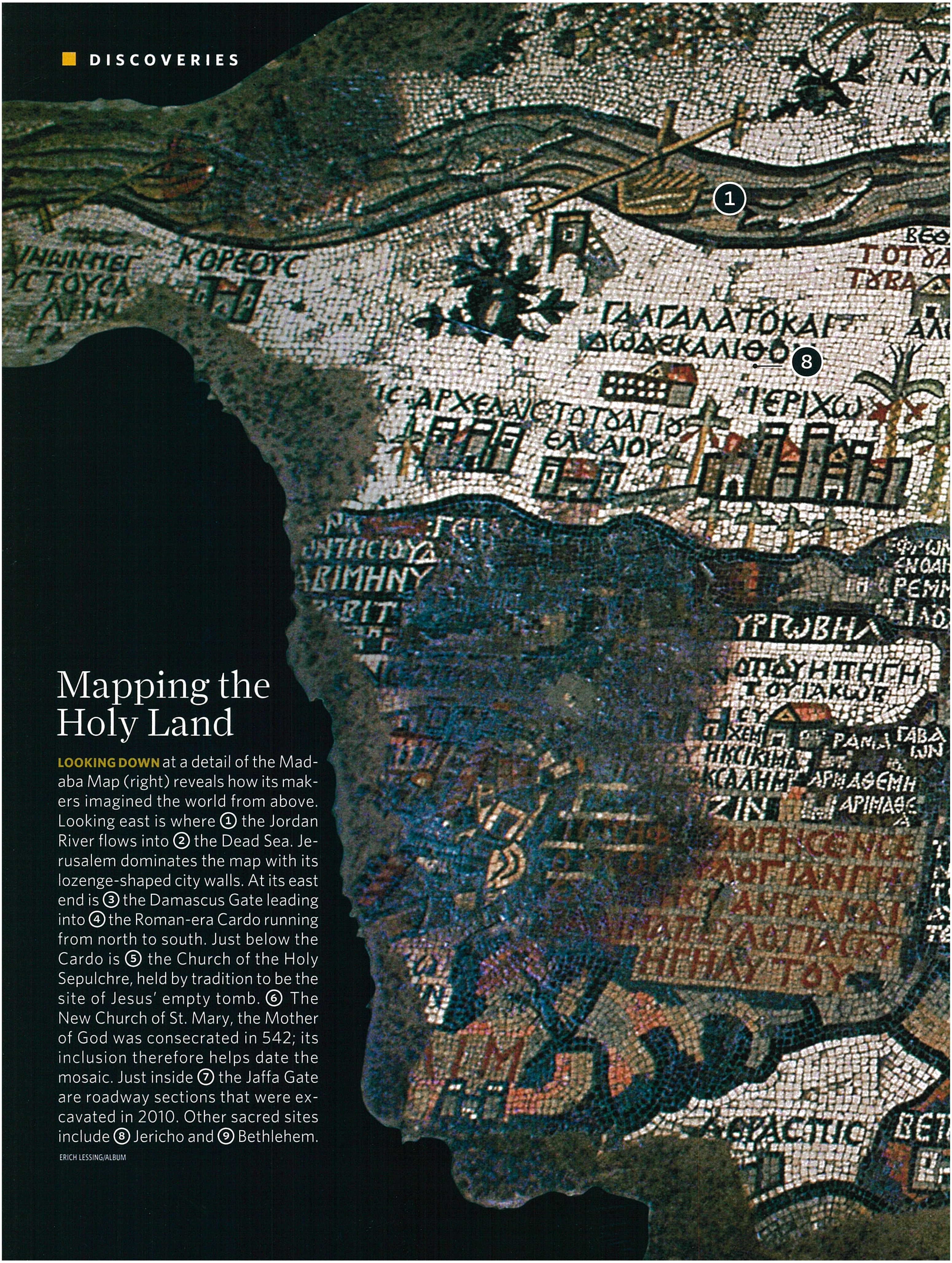
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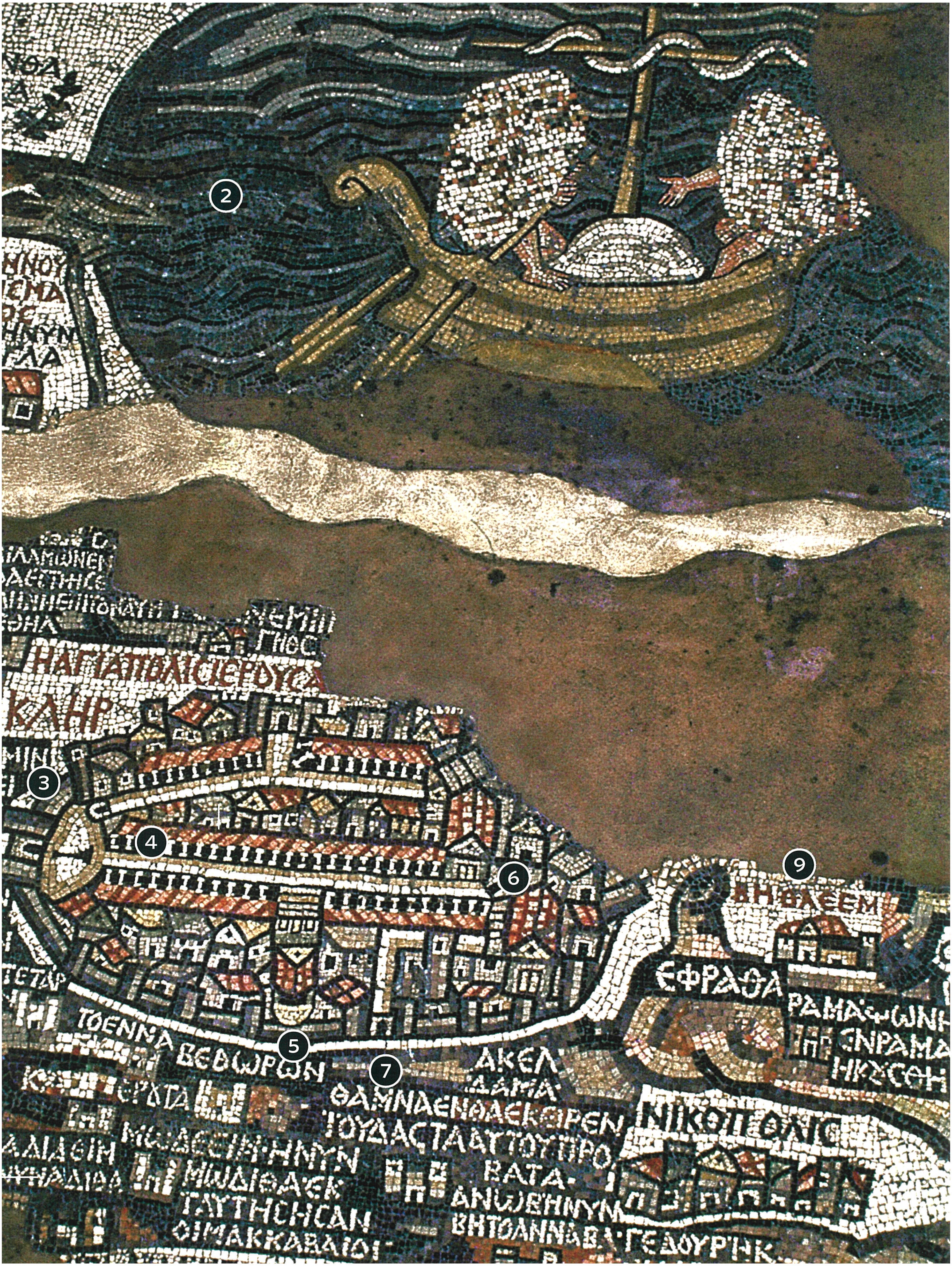
Mapping the Holy Land

LOOKING DOWN at a detail of the Madaba Map (right) reveals how its makers imagined the world from above. Looking east is where ① the Jordan River flows into ② the Dead Sea. Jerusalem dominates the map with its lozenge-shaped city walls. At its east end is ③ the Damascus Gate leading into ④ the Roman-era Cardo running from north to south. Just below the Cardo is ⑤ the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, held by tradition to be the site of Jesus' empty tomb. ⑥ The New Church of St. Mary, the Mother of God was consecrated in 542; its inclusion therefore helps date the mosaic. Just inside ⑦ the Jaffa Gate are roadway sections that were excavated in 2010. Other sacred sites include ⑧ Jericho and ⑨ Bethlehem.

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM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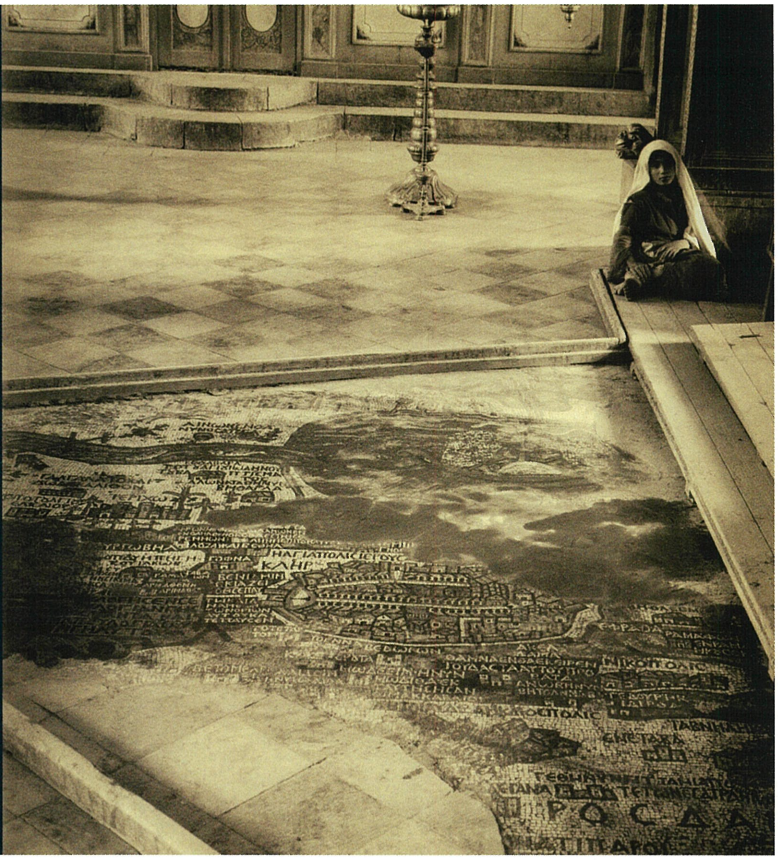
ΟΙ ΜΑΚΚΑΒΑΙΟΙ

DEFACED AND DAMAGED

SOME SECTIONS of the Madaba Mosaic Map have been destroyed, particularly its eastern and northern portions. Damage caused by fire and falling masonry might have been inflicted by the Sassanian Persian armies, who ravaged the Byzantine lands in 614. Worship continued at the Church of St. George, however, and Madaba, which later surrendered to the Muslims, was spared destruction. Crudely repaired figures suggest illustrative elements in the mosaic may have been defaced on the orders of the eighth-century caliph Yazid II. The Church of St. George was probably destroyed by fire in the eighth century, and it lay abandoned until 1884.



MADABA MOSAIC, 1905 PHOTOGRAPH

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

pictorial sense. Although the Madaba mosaic has such pictorial elements—buildings rendered in naturalistic detail and vivid depictions of objects and animals—its design, a bird's-eye view of the region, was unique.

Koikylides wrote a monograph on it in 1897, and the German Society for the Exploration of Palestine undertook the first extensive surveys of the mosaic in the early 1900s. In 1965 a major restoration project was undertaken by the same society under the direction of Heinz Cüppers and Herbert Donner. By then, its significance was clear: A cartographic masterpiece, the Madaba mosaic is the earliest map of the Holy Land.

Pieced Together

The cartographic accuracy of the Madaba Map enabled scholars to identify landmarks in its representation of Jerusalem. Among these is the New Church of St. Mary, the Mother of God, consecrated on November 20, 542.

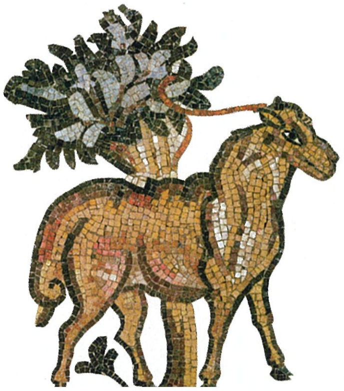
Several other churches across the Holy Land can also be identified thanks to the high level of artistic detail. Many of these monuments are mentioned in documents about the Holy Land written around this time, which could have been a source for the mosaic-makers. One source could have been an account written around 570 by an Italian pilgrim to the Holy Land.

Other clues offer a latest possible date for the map's dating. A monastery in Gaza, built on the site of the birthplace of the fourth-century St. Hilarion, is clearly marked; it was destroyed in 614, around the time the Sassanian Persian king Khosrow II rampaged through Palestine in his war with the Byzantines. Given that the map does not reflect the monastery's destruction, the mosaic had to be created sometime between 542 and 614, possibly during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian the Great, who died in 565.

The narrow dating window means that archaeologists can cross-reference in order to date archaeological finds. The map shows a broad road inside Jerusalem's Jaffa Gate. In 2010 solid evidence of that road was finally unearthed, further reinforcing scholars' view that the Madaba mosaic is not just a beautiful and complex artwork, but a cartographic record of another age.

—Ruben Montoya

The map's cartographic accuracy is enlivened with vivid depictions of objects and animals.



A RAM IN A THICKET, A DETAIL FROM THE MADABA MOSAIC

ALBUM

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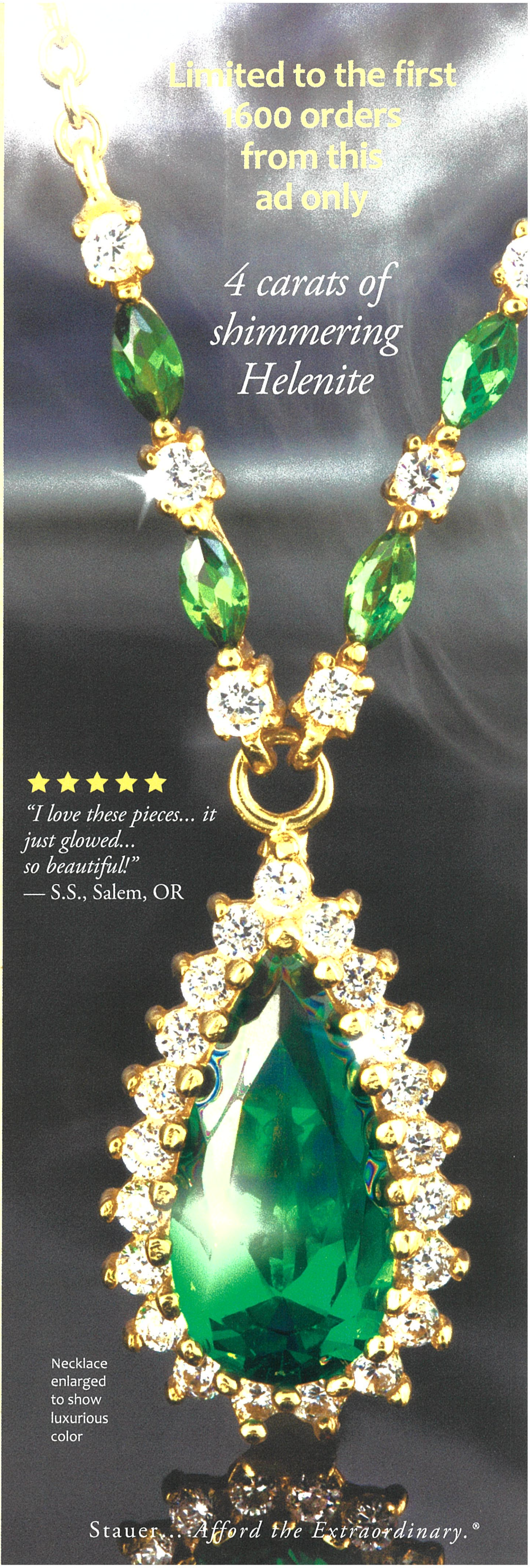
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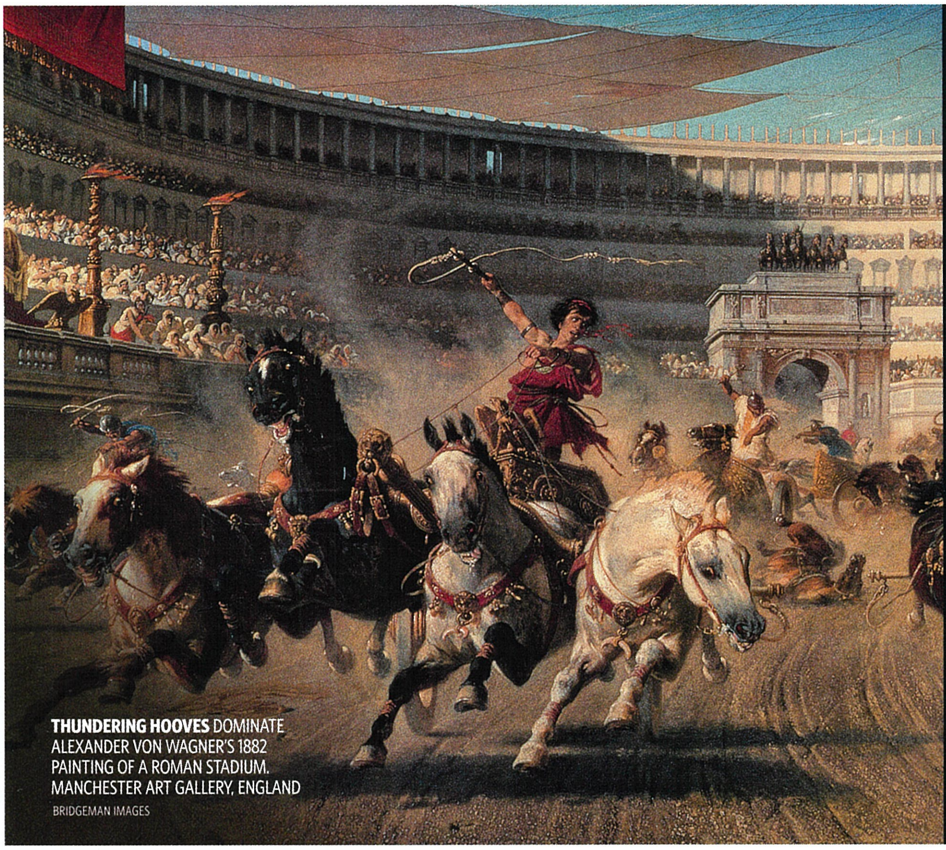

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TERRACOTTA ARCHER. THIRD CENTURY B.C., MAUSOLEUM OF EMPEROR QIN SHI HUANG DI, XIAN, CHINA

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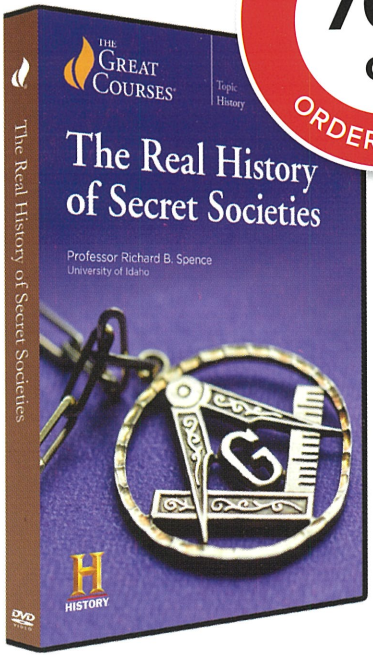
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